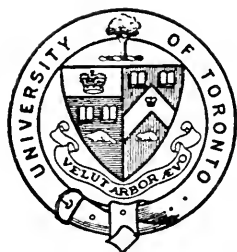




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A SISTER TO ESAU

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BY

AMELIA E. BARR

AUTHOR OF "FRIEND OLIVIA," "JAN VEDDER'S WIFE," "FEET OF CLAY,"
"A BORDER SHEPHERDESS," ETC.

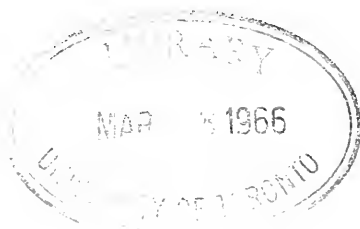
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A SISTER TO ESAU.

I.

A STRANGE TITLE DEED.

“For valiant men and bonnie lasses,
Old Fife all other lands surpasses.”

—*Old Song.*

SOMEWHAT north of Elie, where the grand coast of Fife runs backward into lovely valleys and green pastures, there is a large gray house with corbeled walls and high turrets. It is the home of the Blair-Rodneys; and it has been for hundreds of years a part of the beautiful landscape.

The men of Rodney have been always men of the sword and the sea; and the walls of the old kirk by Rodney Law are crowded with the worn brasses, recording their warlike deeds at home and abroad. And, side by side with them, the shining tablets of our own day keep the names of soldiers and sailors of the same family, who died but yesterday in the service of Queen Victoria; men of valor, all of them, but passing into the night, and leaving earth no better for their mighty pilgrimage.

In A.D. 1842, the owner of Rodney House was Colonel Kinross Rodney, a soldier who had spent most of his life in the East Indies, and had only in-

herited in consequence of the unexpected demise of three nearer heirs. He was an exceedingly proud man, and specially proud of his descent from a family so ancient and so honorable. As long as his sword was his only fortune he had been reticent on the subject, but he was very much inclined to magnify his ancestors when he became their representative. For he considered himself high-steward of the Blair-Rodney interests; he was to guard their honor, and to increase their wealth and local importance.

He assumed this charge with an exaggerated idea of the value of money; for the lesson he had learned from a long life of straits and struggles was—that honor, valor, and noble birth were shorn of their proper glory if they were linked with poverty. He had talked differently when he was a poor man, for he had felt differently, and his change of sentiment expressed nothing worse than a change of circumstances. He was a man to whom the highest duty was the highest ideal. When he had worn the sword, absolute obedience and invincible valor was the rule of his life. Now that the honor of his ancestors and the welfare of his descendants were in his hands, he was actuated by an almost painful sense of his responsibility.

“I must leave the estate better than I found it, Dorinda,” he would say to his wife. “To simply enjoy it, would be dishonorable. I could as little do it as I could have idled in barracks when I ought to have been out with my troop, keeping the frontier.”

Fortunately, he had a wife after his own heart. Mrs. Rodney never forgot, even in her dreams, that she was the daughter of a Highland family whose antiquity was unfathomable. The Rodneys might have been earls of Fife in the mythical reign of Cor-

bred the First ; but how much more ancient were the MacDonalds? Did they not take possession of Morven, even at the very time Julius Cæsar was fighting the painted warriors of Southern Britain? She was a tall, slender woman, usually dressed in the MacDonald tartan. Her face was grave, her manner high-bred, and free alike from arrogance and familiarity—a woman of strong purpose and of firm will.

She had lost three sons in India, and though a religious person, this was an affliction she found it difficult to forgive the Almighty. For though her daughters were dear to her, she recognized that they were but “second bests” for the great purpose of the family honor and interest. Both were unknown quantities, and they might want to marry unsatisfactory people. Certainly Bertha was as yet considerate, affectionate, and obedient, but how would her character stand the test of a lover? She had even now occasional fits of stubbornness, and these might indicate qualities undeveloped, and of which Bertha herself was hardly conscious.

As for the elder daughter, Scotia, she was a more certain anxiety. No woman as conservative as Mrs. Rodney could regard without fear, and a certain disapproval, a girl so unconventional as Scotia Rodney. Her very beauty was a trial. It was so unusual, so unfamiliar, so almost insolent in its defiance of the family type and traditions. Whence had come the soul that fashioned that tall, stately form, and that large, exquisite head, with its wonderful length of red hair, waving and curling and radiating light like an aureole? How should her eyes be such celestial blue—blue of the day, not of the night—instead of the traditional brown or black of the family? And in

such a miserable world, full of sin, and of suffering as the penalty of sin, was not Scotia's gay, joyous temper indiscreet, unfeeling perhaps, indeed, something worse?

One evening, in the early spring of 1842, Mrs. Rodney was occupying her mind with such thoughts, the while her hands were laboriously working the family crest on some fine damask napkins. The lingering glooms of twilight brood long in that latitude, and she knew that the Colonel and his daughters were not likely to return from their walk, until the gray, pale lights were all dark. So she sat still, sometimes drawing the needle through with a calm, regular intentness, sometimes dropping her hands upon her lap, and allowing her eyes to look far out, and to see things which were invisible. For beyond the garden, and beyond the park and the meadows, she saw a great gray boulder, called the "Stone of the Writing," and she felt certain that her husband and children were before it.

She divined truly. The Colonel, also, was speaking in a loud, yet monotonous voice, reciting words which he evidently knew as well as he knew his own name. Yet they were not intelligible to any one but himself; though the difference between the majestic Latin and the shrill, sibilant Gaelic was sufficiently marked to apprise Scotia when one passed into the other.

As soon as the Colonel ceased speaking, she said :

"Who graved the inscription, father? To what does it refer? I know that you have been reciting in Latin and Gaelic, but of your meaning, I know nothing at all."

"Nor do I," said Bertha, "though, I dare say, it is something about Fingal or Ossian."

"Children, it is the title-deed to our estate. The first holders of Blair-Rodney won it, and held it with their swords ; they would have thought a parchment deed a disgrace. But when Rodney stood by the Bruce, and received this land in reward, he graved his right upon this everlasting rock."

"But have we no parchments, father?" asked Bertha. "If there should come question of our right, how would the stone witness be taken to Edinburgh Court?"

"My dear, you are not the first of your race to foresee that difficulty. James Rodney, in Queen Mary's reign, won the Queen's favor, and asked and received from her the parchment which secures in all courts our right. Then the men of Blair-Rodney no longer picked out the letters with their sword points. Some of the holders did indeed keep the old record clear ; others let the moss and lichen cover it. I have just had it restored. It was only finished this afternoon, and I was impatient to show it to you. I fear you do not share my enthusiasm."

"It is the grandest thing in our keeping, father," and Scotia turned a face radiating pride and pleasure toward the Stone of Witness. "I shall come here very often, and never once without calling to remembrance the men whose valor and loyalty won our right, and whose fingers cut in the gray rock the record of it. If one could only pray for the dead, I would always say here a prayer for their everlasting peace."

"Scotia ! How can you think of such an awful thing ? To pray for the dead ! You know that is rank popery !" And Bertha regarded her sister with unqualified dissent and disapproval.

"These early Blairs and Rodneys were papists, of course, Bertha. I dare say they would be grateful for the prayer."

"Scotia Rodney! If the minister could only hear you!"

"What has the minister to do with my prayers?"—then more softly and solemnly—"who can interfere between a soul and its Maker? To suppose that any minister understands a relation so personal is indeed popery of the rankest kind."

"Children, we will leave theology alone. What can we say for our dead kindred? They are gone to the mercy of The Merciful. They know the grand secret, now—all of them."

"If they could only make themselves visible, father, what a host they would be! Soldiers with banners, and claymores, and horses fleet as the wind!"

"Men become spirits, but horses do not. You should be careful, and not let your imagination run to such lengths, sister. It is really wicked!"

"If the Bible be true, Bertha, there are horses in heaven; chariots of fire, horses and horsemen thereof! John saw them, and Elisha saw them. Isaiah says, the beasts honor God. David says, they pray to Him for food; and when God made a covenant with man after the flood, He also made a covenant with every living creature. Human beings think a great deal too much of themselves, and a great deal too little of God's other creatures."

"The world is made for man, Scotia."

"Pardon me, dear father, if I dare to think a little different. Is the rain and the sunshine sent for man only? Are they not also sent for the trees and the herbage? Are the trees and the herbage for man

only? The birds sleep in the branches ; the animals dwell in the covert of the woods."

"Man has the knowledge and the fear of God, Scotia."

"Remembering all that the Bible says about beasts, birds, and even insects, how dare we say that all creation does not have knowledge of God ; and as for His favor, man seeks his food with labor and pain ; the animals neither plow nor sow ; God feeds them !"

"We are lords over animals ; they are given to us for food."

"They also chase and devour men."

"Scotia, my dear, you are talking as women talk—illogically."

"Are truth and logic identical, father ?"

"We are getting beyond our subject. How has this argument grown out of our title? Children, will you reverence this stone when the place that knows me now knows me no more forever ?"

"I will keep it as clear as it is this moment, if it be within my ability to do so ; I promise you, father."

It was Scotia who spoke. Her face was solemn, her voice had her heart in it. And Bertha noticed that her father seemed satisfied with Scotia's assurance. He did not interrogate her specially ; he did not notice her silence. She looked at her sister with a query in her eyes that was not a kindly one. And she thought thus in her heart :

"Scotia, then, has already decided that the estate is hers. But my right is quite as strong. I do not believe in primogeniture, neither does mother. She says the whole story of Esau and Jacob denies it—

the elder shall serve the younger—we shall see. I will tell mother what Scotia said."

As these thoughts passed through Bertha's mind, the Colonel lifted his hat to the old stone pillar, and slowly turned toward his home. And all her life Scotia kept his memory as she saw him in that act—his tall, spare figure wrapped in a military cloak, his solemn enthusiastic face, his lifted eyes, his bare, white head, and his outstretched arm, saluting. It was a picture in the still, gray twilight which commanded sympathy, because it was so genuine and so unselfish.

"I have seen many a fine statue," he said, as they walked slowly through the yet brown fields, "but what is a statue to an old inscription? A human voice issued from that rock, and made itself audible through the void of centuries. It told me that I was not alone; that other men—men of my kindred—had stood where I stood, and had thought and felt as I felt. Hundreds of years ago that stone found speech, and still its words are living words. But where are the men and women it spoke for?"

He asked the question with a wistful solemnity, and immediately answered it,—“God knows where, and we shall know.”

Then they went silently forward. In the dark, swaying plantations the rooks were going over their last roll call, and the partridges, with a chirr-ch-chir, were hastening to the unplowed turnip fields; but these sounds blended with the fall of their own footsteps, and entered the ears and the heart without consciousness. When they reached the village it was nearly dark, but at the cottage doors men and women were still standing. Their faces were patient and somber, made so by the patient processes

of Nature with which their own lives were blent. All were servants or tenants of Rodney, and they lifted their bonnets in quiet respect as he passed. But hinds and shepherds are not talkative, they learn to be silent in the lonely spaces of the fields and the upper fells.

"I thought of calling on the minister;" said the Colonel. "But it is late, and the manse is not lighted, so we will not delay. Perhaps he is from home."

To call upon the minister after their evening walk was a very usual act. Rodney liked to saunter the last half mile in his company; he liked to see him at his table and fireside; he enjoyed his supper and his glass of Glenlivet doubly, if the minister was present to give the fillip of contradiction to his opinions. And this ending to the evening was just as pleasant to Scotia and Bertha. For the Reverend Angus Bruce was the one young man who had yet come familiarly into their lives; and he was a very remarkable young man.

Three months previously the Colonel, to gratify an old army friend, had presented Angus Bruce to the charge of the kirk at Rodney Law. And greatly to the surprise of all, he had been accepted with scarce a demurring voice. This circumstance was the more remarkable, because at that time Scotland was fighting every known civil power of the realm on this very subject of patronage, and any minister offered by temporal influence was prejudged an "Intruder."

But Angus Bruce had come with his authority on his lips. The first sermon he preached gave him his warrant to the pulpit. There was not a shepherd with the Five Points at his five finger ends, who did not

allow Angus Bruce to be a grand priest after the order of John Calvin. Even Adam Gowrie admitted it; and he was a judge of orthodoxy so uncompromising that his very collie dog whined or howled a protest, if there was any modification in the pulpit of the great doctrines of election and eternal punishment.

The young minister was also a very handsome man. Physically he was such a priest as the law of Levi demands—without spot or blemish; not tall, but admirably built; slender, lean, stript for the conflict of life, and full of animal vigor, tempered by nervous irritability. He had an ecclesiastical type of face; pale, dark, severe, though sometimes fairly transfigured by flashes of sudden pleasure or feeling. Added to these advantages was the great charm of spiritual authority, and the ultra-terrestrial influence which a fine preacher, lifted up by his office above all conditions, must necessarily exert. And in this office none could gainsay Angus Bruce. He was fiery, vehement, terribly Calvinistic—not a loophole in all his shining mail—and he spoke as Elihu begins:

I am full of words,
The spirit within constrains me,

every word pushing the right way; every word going home.

That such a young man should exert a powerful influence over girls with the dew of their youth still on them was exceedingly natural. Neither admitted the fact, and yet neither deceived the other.

"I am sure that Scotia has fallen in love with the minister," Bertha had said one confidential hour to her mother; and Mrs. Rodney had answered with emphasis, "See that you do nothing so foolish. Your

father sends for young Blair Rodney very soon, and whoever marries Blair, will get Rodney, and all the land about it."

Yet in spite of this hint, Bertha was as much disappointed as Scotia when they saw the manse unlighted, and heard the Colonel's determination to hasten homeward. But both remained silent, for both were afraid of revealing themselves. The little gate to the manse garden was passed, and they were stepping gloomily along the path by the stone wall and its bare hedge, when a woman put her head above it. She was old, and her large brown face was surrounded by the thick borders of her white cap, but Scotia saw her with pleasure.

"God be wi' you, Colonel Rodney. Is it the minister you're wanting? He's awa' to the kirk-yard to think oot his sermon."

"To the kirk-yard, Grizel?"

"Even sae, Colonel. Is there ony better place to wrastle wi' heaven and hell, and death and judgment? Minister Laing studied wi' his spindle shanks spread oot to the blaze, and a glass o' toddy to his hand. Ye ken yoursel' what kind o' sermons he gave us."

"The kirk-yard is a cold study, Grizel."

"It's our lang hame, sir. And God kens we are a' dying creatures; our life is just within our lips; we are here to-day and gane to-morrow."

"How is your toothache, Grizel?"

"Deed, Miss Rodney, I hae the best o' it. I got it pulled oot, and I burned it up wi' a bit o' hazel stick; but I hae the rhuematics—awfu'."

"And you have many other things, Grizel Gowrie. Adam and you have a good home with the minister, and you are saving money, I dare say."

"We all hae our blessings, Colonel; but in some way or ither the Lord taks them oot o' us. He taks them a' oot o' me in rhuematics. Bid the minister hame wi' ye, sir, for a bite and a sup and a warld-like company. He's been stepping atween the dead and the kirk lang enough for ae Sawbath day's preaching."

In a few moments they reached the kirk, and all peered curiously into the solemn yard around it. A deeper darkness had settled there, for the old yew trees cast black shadows over the lonely spot. But the white flags which made a path around the kirk were all the more distinct, and on them the minister was slowly walking, now visible, now lost to sight—a gloomy, spectral figure, whose slow, deliberate movements had a singular fascination. They watched him for a few moments, and then the Colonel passed onward without a word.

A great depression seemed to fall upon each, and the rest of their walk was taken hastily, as if escaping from something unhappy. Old Grizel's thin, querulous voice, the preacher's solemn vigil, the sad portents of the sighing yew trees and the ghost-like gravestones—even the hard, motionless, granite idea of the old kirk assailed their hearts through their imaginations, and for the moment they could not escape those rudimental terrors of darkness and death which we bring into the world with us and only conquer in moments of triumphant faith and hope.

"How uncanny the minister was," said Bertha to her sister, as they removed their cloaks and furs; "he looked so tall in the gloom and his down-bent face so white and phantom-like."

"And Bertha, I fancied there were people—ghosts I mean—behind us, after we left the kirk-yard. I expected to feel a hand, or hear a whisper, every step I took. Father stayed out too long; and the influence of the Stone Pillar was on me. Whether we were interested or not, perhaps those behind us were."

"I do not believe they either know, or care, anything about an old granite boulder, with some Latin and Gaelic words on it. The next life can be little better than this if such things interest the dead. Of course, I would not say so to father, but——"

"May not such things be symbols of family honor and faith? and of family ties, that are not broken by death?"

"The dead are so far off."

"How can we tell? They go out from us, but perhaps only to the next room of life."

"The Bible says nothing about a next room. People go either to heaven or hell when they die. I am afraid a great many go to hell. Did you see that letter on the table beside father's place? I have an idea that it is from our cousin Blair. I suppose he is coming here soon."

"Father told me so. He is our nearest kin."

"And wants to be nearer. He is only thirty years old, and mother has read about him at the games. They say he is 'the prettiest man in Perthshire': that is, he has the most inches, and can run the farthest, and leap the highest, and shoot the closest, and do all sorts of wonderful things beside. Will he be handsome, also, do you think?"

"I dare say he will have cheeks like carnation, and black eyes, and black hair, and a loud voice, and red

hands. And he will make puns, and consider them 'wit.' "

"And he will sing, 'Will you go to Inverness?' and 'Cam' ye by Athole?'"

"And his talk will be of bullocks."

"Perhaps it is not right, Scotia, to say such things. He may be thinking nicely of us."

It was a conversation of the lips; neither girl thought much of the words she uttered. Scotia stood erect, watching her sister make still smoother the smooth bandeaux which gave her round, baby face such an innocent look. But she was really thinking of that dark figure in the kirk-yard, and her soul was, in a dim, unacknowledged way, keeping with his soul the lonely session with the darkness and the dead.

"Let us go downstairs, Scotia. I dare say father is waiting for us." Bertha was now satisfied with her appearance. If the minister came in late, as he had done once or twice, there was not a hair of her head out of its place, and she glanced at Scotia's flowing locks, and wondered how they could be at once so untidy and so becoming. "Let us go downstairs, father will be waiting for us. It is time for the Exercise;" and her tone was almost reproving. For a moment, Scotia felt as if she had been the cause of the delay.

The servants, old and young, male and female, had already gathered in the parlor; and the Colonel, at his daughters' entrance, rose with The Book in his hand. He was not a scholar, but Scotia thought no one could read like him. He gave out the portion in its course—"The Word of the Lord by Joel the son of Pethuel; the First Chapter." The leaves rustled in the hands of the hinds and the maids; there was a short deep stillness, and then softly and solemnly, the

wondrous picture grew, verse by verse :—the fig tree stripped of its bark, standing white against the arid landscape—the bride wailing for her husband—the night-watch of the supplicating priests—the empty garners—the perishing herds. And how forcible were these things to the men and women who knew the hopes and fears of agricultural and pastoral life !

Ere the chapter was ended, the minister came quietly among them ; and it was his voice that lifted the supplicating prayer. Scotia thought it had tones in it she had never heard before, and she wondered if they had been caught in that solemn communion from which he had just come. Bertha heard them not, she was congratulating herself upon her prudence. She felt that she could do herself perfect justice ; her hair was in beautiful order ; her collar fresh ; on her feet were the red sandals so coquettishly becoming ; on her hands the rings which accentuated their whiteness, and drew attention to their small size.

Yes, people do think of such vanities, even in the presence of God. For an ear for spiritual discourse is quite as distinct a thing as an ear for music ; and Bertha Rodney had no comprehension of that prayer which is the motion of an hidden fire. But she knew that a beautiful woman kneeling is doubly beautiful ; and that the act of worship is, in itself, one of the most poetic acts of humanity.

II.

WORDS HALF SPOKEN.

“Why are we whose strength is but for a day, so full of schemes? Let the mind which is now glad hate to carry its care beyond the present, and temper the bitters of life with easy smiles.”—*Horace*.

“To-night Love claims his full control
And with desire and with regret
My soul this hour has drawn your soul
A little nearer yet.”

—*Rosetti*.

RODNEY HOUSE was at this date a beautiful residence, half castellated, and half-monastic in style; a house with a home-like air; long, rambling, old, and full of all pleasant conditions. It was surrounded by a wide garden space, laid out in the Dutch fashion. In summer and autumn this garden was a very paradise of sweet scents; flowers, and fruits, and herbs mingling their separate perfumes in one general spicy fragrance.

Around, the land was hilly and woody, broken by miniature copses, full of the tones of water, and the inland sounds of trees and birds; of the cuckoo's sweet dissyllable, and the nightingale's solemn music; and from the meadows and the painful furrows, the lark's all-invincible song of hope.

The sea was not far away, and its blessed breezes mingled with the landward winds, and charged them

potently with the magic savors of iodine and ozone. From the upper windows of the house, and from the higher fells around it, many a mile of Ocean's gray spaces were clearly visible, and often the Colonel rose early, that he might see in the morning light the fleet of fishing boats tip the horizon ; their wet sails barred with sunshine, waving and bending with the wind, and glorious as an army with banners.

Between him and the sea were

Upon the landward braes,
Scattered farms and cottar folk :
And the fishers who kept to their own old ways,
In the village that huddled beneath the rock ;
Where a sheltering cove made a safe retreat
For the brown lug-sails of their little fleet.

But further description might reveal the precise locality to inquisitive tourists, who would hunt it, and make it a lion, and get it at last into guide books.

Now Scotia Rodney was a girl of the fields and the woods. She was a familiar of the animals who dwelt in them, and the birds told her their secrets. She understood the brotherhood of the trees, and the scent of herbs was delicious to her ; all her clothing smelt of the ethereal perfume of the shy woodruff. But Bertha was a girl of the house. Her small feet loved carpeted rooms, she liked the sunshine through curtains, she enjoyed soft couches and touching love-stories, and the ripple of her own voice to the piano. The wind disarranged her hair, the rain gave her cold, the cold made her shiver, and the sun spoiled her skin. Bertha's world could have been easily arranged within the precincts of a handsome modern house, and the daily walk, which the Colonel compelled her to take for her health's sake, was one of those things she

was resolved to put a stop to—as soon as she was married.

Mrs. Rodney had much the same tastes as her daughter Bertha, though in her case they were the result of circumstances. Her life in India did not admit of much out-door exercise, and the sedentary habit once formed was not to be broken. She thought the weather in Scotland just as home-compelling, and then, she had grown old and a little stout ; movement tired her, and the house did not get on well if she was out of it.

Naturally, then, Bertha became her companion, and many things made her a very sympathetic one. Bertha's neatness, her love of order, her dainty personal predilections, were all reproductions of the same qualities in herself. If there was any employment Scotia hated, it was needlework ; but Bertha could dawdle a month away embroidering her crest upon her handkerchief. And as she sat sewing by her mother's side, they talked together of the subjects so interesting to such women—their callers and their servants, their little grievances and their new dresses.

Scotia's tastes had been derived from her father, but he was not able to give her the same sympathy. His health was frail ; he was a late riser ; it was always afternoon or evening before he felt able to take his regular walk, and this was the only effort he made. But he liked to talk with Scotia of all she saw in her solitary rambles ; and was often able to supplement her investigations by his own early experience.

Families are often thus sharply divided, especially if their number be small. And at first in the Rodney family the mischief of it was not apparent. It began when Scotia was scarce sixteen, and when the Colonel

went out a great deal. Then his demands for the companionship of his daughters were frequently felt by Bertha to be a trial and a grievance, and she applied herself diligently to the consideration of some plan for escaping these frequent walks. She had headaches; she had her music to practice; her mother needed her help. She took pains to conciliate Scotia, and to engage her to assume the duty as her own, so that by the mere iteration of events, Scotia gradually became the constant companion of her father.

Scotia was not loth to accept the position. They walked, and sailed, and rode together; and when stormy weather compelled them to keep the house, the Colonel busied his eldest daughter in revising his military diary, and in answering his letters. The partial isolation which these literary duties demanded was not at first disagreeable to Mrs. Rodney and Bertha. But as the years went on and the Colonel's health failed, and the girls grew to womanhood, then this close companionship fretted their mother. The estate was entirely at the Colonel's disposal. He could give it all to Scotia if he desired, and though it was understood that in the matter of Blair Rodney, both the young man and the girls were to have the utmost freedom of choice, Mrs. Rodney felt sure that her husband's influence would almost unconsciously be in favor of a marriage between Scotia and the next natural heir to Rodney Law.

She knew also that the Colonel would not break the estate. She had hinted at this possibility, and had been met by the most positive assertion that he had no moral right to do so. "One of the girls must marry Blair, and keep the estate intact," he said.

"But suppose neither of the girls will marry Blair, or suppose that Blair has no disposition to marry either of the girls? Both conditions are supposable, Kinross."

"Of course they are, Dorinda."

"Well, then?"

"It is supposable, also, that the girls will marry some one, if they neither of them marry our cousin."

"They are beautiful; one will be rich. They are sure to marry."

"Then we will choose the son-in-law of the best family, and give him our name."

"He may refuse to take it."

"Then the other one."

"He also may refuse. There are men who will not part with their family name for either love or gold. Would you? Divide the estate between your daughters. Why should you care for men you never saw? Has not Providence, by denying you sons, decreed that your family should die out."

"Dorinda, why should my late cousin James Rodney have cared for me? He had never seen me. He was friendly with the Blairs, and also with Blair Rodney's father. Yet he respected my prior claim, and rendered me the fullest justice. Shall I be less honorable to my posterity? And Providence has not decreed the extinction of my family. I have third, fourth, and fifth cousins. I must wrong none of them."

The expected visit of Blair Rodney was then a very important affair. The Colonel was secretly desirous that Scotia should marry the young man, and so inherit after him. Mrs. Rodney was determined that Bertha should be the mistress of Rodney Law. Both

were reckoning without any adequate knowledge of their quantities. Nothing could be predicted of the coming suitor, for nothing particular was known of him. Under the circumstances, Scotia and Bertha were equally uncertain. The Colonel assured his wife that he had left all to that ordinating power which controls every human life ; yet twenty times a day he checked himself, for wondering how far his express command, or even his wish, would influence Scotia. Mrs. Rodney was certain that her daughters' husbands were chosen from all eternity, yet she talked continually to Bertha about Blair Rodney, and urged her to secure his affections as the only means of securing her future wealth and position.

Nor did she think herself specially unkind in this partisanship. She believed that Scotia's beauty might well stand for her fortune. Bertha was far less attractive to the general eye, and as one of them must be rich, and the other arrive at riches and position through a fortunate marriage, it seemed to Mrs. Rodney, Scotia was best equipped by nature to win what she did not inherit. She reminded Bertha that luxury was a necessity to her ; and that she was totally unfit to endure privation of any kind. On the contrary, Scotia was indifferent to physical discomfort ; she was careless of money and unappreciative of social honor. How easy, then, it would be for Scotia to descend a little in rank, all her tastes being of so unfashionable a kind !

It was while affairs were in this condition the Colonel had the writing on the Stone Pillar renewed. The crisis of his daughters' lives drew near, and he counted upon everything likely to intensify their family pride, and the clannish affection which would be its legiti-

mate outcome. He himself had been greatly moved by the ancient record, and he supposed Scotia and Bertha shared his emotion. In a large measure, Scotia did so ; Bertha lacked the sentiment of reverence, and to her the old Stone was an old stone, and nothing more. Very soon, however, it became something definitely disagreeable, for the Colonel made it the terminus of his daily walk, and Bertha grew weary to death of the monotony of the road ; of the reiterated enthusiasm ; of being compelled to endorse sentiments she did not feel.

As the spring advanced, the expected visit of Blair Rodney began to assume a definite aspect. He was in correspondence with the Colonel, and he asserted his delight in the prospect. But when the Colonel fixed a certain day for his arrival, the young man found an indisputable excuse,—“ He preferred not to be bound by any date. He would much rather give them a surprise.”

This reply did not please Colonel Rodney. He understood from it far more of Blair Rodney than Blair expressed.

“ The fellow must have an amazing self-complacency, Dorinda,” was his comment on the letter ; for he felt the pettiness of that nature which supposes, in its measureless conceit, that the “ surprise ” of its arrival must necessarily be delightful.

Scotia evidently held the same opinion. “ My cousin is preparing an overwhelming pleasure ; he is going to give us a ‘ surprise ’ visit. We have been on the watchtower for a week,” she said to the minister, as she was sauntering with him one evening between the manse and Rodney House. The Colonel was with them, but he was a little behind, having

been detained by his steward about some farm matter.

They stood still as she spoke, and Angus Bruce looked steadily at Scotia. Her irresistible beauty made his heart thrill and tremble with delight. She stood in the rays of the setting sun and her hair was a glory around her. Rosy emanations appeared to come from her radiant face. Her green cloth dress, the pink kerchief round her throat, the white daisies in her hand, the little gypsy bonnet of rough straw tied under her white, resolute chin, were all indivisible parts of an exquisite womanly picture.

"Miss Rodney !"

The two words were two volumes. They were words with a soul in them. They forced open the minister's usually firm lips, and they quivered with the heat and passion that had enabled them to break that well-guarded barrier.

And common as the words were, Scotia understood their meaning. She looked into the face of Angus Bruce, and she was dumb. But he saw the soul leap into her eyes, and his soul saluted it then and there. Her red lips parted, she was going to speak, and at the same moment the Colonel laid his hand upon her shoulder, and stepped between them. Whether the movement was accidental or intentional Scotia could not determine. But it brought with it a chill restraint. Neither Bruce nor Scotia could speak, and the Colonel's words seemed to be very far away from the two full hearts, that affected to listen to them.

At the door the minister stood still ; he would go no further, and in spite of an exaggerated civility on the Colonel's part, he declined his invitation to supper. Scotia stood motionless and speechless. She tried to

catch the minister's glance once more, but he did not permit her ; and she felt an inexpressible sinking of her heart, as he turned away without any sign of their momentary understanding.

With a grumble of disappointment the Colonel passed into the house ; but Scotia lingered until she saw the lonely figure disappear among the somber shadows of the garden. Then her hands dropped to her side, and the daisies were scattered at her feet. She stooped to gather them, for she heard Bertha's step, and she was glad to find in the act an excuse, not only for her loitering, but for an attitude which permitted her to look upon the ground instead of in her sister's face.

"Was Angus Bruce walking with you to-night, Scotia ?"

"Yes. He would not come in. Father pressed him to do so, but he would not come in."

"It is a strange thing that we never meet him when I walk with you. One might suppose that father wished to make a marriage between you and the minister."

"One might suppose any number of absurd things. Supposition is not circumstance."

"What are you picking up ? Daisies ? Did Angus Bruce give them to you ?"

"No."

"I am sure he did."

"I gathered them myself, at the foot of the Stone Pillar."

"I do not believe you !" Bertha spoke with a contemptuous passion, and Scotia stood straight and looked at her.

"Is it worth your while to be jealous, Bertha ?"

The words were aggravating. Scotia was sorry as soon as they were uttered, sorry and ashamed. But Bertha gave her no opportunity of modifying them. She flung back the one word "jealous"; and with a white face, left Scotia standing at the open door, with the re-gathered daisies in her hand.

Those who know what it is to touch, without grasping, may comprehend the sickness of disappointment which depressed Scotia, and which made her momentarily thoughtless and unkind. For Bertha's words at that hour were specially bitter, because Angus Bruce had spoken, and then instantly been as one who had not spoken. She knew, also, that she had answered him; and she was humiliated, because he had not accepted her answer.

"I will never give him such an opportunity to wound me again." She promised her heart this satisfaction, but it refused to find any comfort in the retaliation. And then, not unnaturally, the personal irritation became more general, and she felt that all the world was out of touch and sympathy with her.

Colonel Rodney was eating his brose and butter when she went to the parlor, and an open letter was by his side. She took her place at the table with a shrug, and a meaning glance at the untidy epistle. The writing was large and blotted, and it had been closed with a sprawling seal of red wax.

"Another of Cousin Blair's impertinent apologies, I suppose;" she said.

"Why impertinent, Scotia?"

"If you do not see it so, dear mother, then of course I misunderstand the situation."

"Blair Rodney is not Angus Bruce;" said Bertha very sweetly. "The minister has nothing to do but

run after the Laird. Blair is a gentleman with an estate to manage."

"There is no comparison between the men, Bertha."

"That is precisely what I was saying, Scotia."

"The minister will have a large enough question to answer soon ;" said the Colonel. "From Shetland to Galloway, Scotland is at fever heat anent the affairs of her kirk. And the Queen and the Parliament are even-down Gallios ; they care for none of these things."

A spirit of contradiction took instant possession of Scotia. She was delighted to include the whole kirk in the one special minister who had wounded her that night ; and she answered with a petulant pity :

"Poor Gallio ! If I had an enemy, I would like to make him a scripture character, and have him preached about from countless pulpits, generation after generation ; more particularly, if a fault was attributed to him impossible in the state of society in which he lived."

Bertha looked at her sister, and then at her mother, and Mrs. Rodney said :

"Scotia my dear, you are in a bad temper. You are cutting your mutton as if you were cutting some one's head off. Is it the minister you are mentally punishing, or is it Blair Rodney ? He is disappointing, but he will be here very soon now."

"I hope Blair Rodney may never show his face in this house."

"My dear, the house is your father's house."

"God be thanked for that mercy !"

"And as for Gallio, he was a despiser of true religion ; and your father is not to be opposed in

using him as a symbol of a wickedly careless government."

"Pardon, mother ! I think we do Gallio great injustice. He was really nothing worse than a good magistrate, who refused to take any interest in a theological fight."

"Scotia !"

"Father, I appeal to you. The Jews took the Christians to the court of Gallio, and charged them with not worshiping God according to their law—that is, as they worshiped him. The Proconsul Gallio was a pagan ; he knew nothing about the tenets of Christianity, nor yet of Judaism. He felt very much as you would feel, father, if you were called upon to decide a quarrel between Antinomians and Separatists, or Buchanists and Brownists. I dare say you would not care, either."

She had laid down the offending knife and fork, and she spoke with a nervous amount of temper she very rarely exhibited. Mrs. Rodney was astonished and curious. She understood that the old Roman was a mere pretense, and that Scotia's flushed cheeks and eyes, shining with restrained tears, were the evidences of an annoyance far more personal than Gallio's court or the Scottish kirk. She glanced at Bertha, and Bertha sighed, cast down her eyes, and then lifting them, gazed pointedly out of a certain window. Mrs. Rodney understood her. Angus Bruce, then, was a factor in the trouble, but in what respect she could not guess. However, her suspicions were excited, and she continued :

"I think you are sick, Scotia. You have fever; that is to be seen, very plainly. I will give you some medicine before you go to bed."

"No ! I am not sick, mother ; though it is a kind of sickness to have the whim of telling the truth. You once said so, father."

"Yes, my dear ; but I meant about worldly things. It is a pity I spoke of Gallio ; but he is the natural example in cases of religious carelessness."

"I know he is ; and perhaps it is as well not to object. If men and women are to be misrepresented and made examples of in the pulpit, it is better that Greeks and Romans should be the victims. They are dead, and perhaps they won't mind—also, they cannot talk back."

The Colonel looked at his Dorinda inquisitively. A smile was in his eyes, though his lips were drawn tightly together. "There is mair in the atmosphere than its ain proper elements ; as Adam Gowrie would say. Now girls, what is it ?"

"Nothing," said Scotia promptly.

"Nothing," said Bertha, with an air of innocence.

"Nothing that I am familiar with ;" said Mrs. Rodney doubtfully.

"Then Scotia, my child, if you feel cross, attack your neighbors ; that will be fair play, for I'll be bound you will only be paying back scores. Leave religion alone—and the Holy Bible."

"The Holy Bible says nothing of religion. It talks of God, not of religion. It tells us to be godly, not religious. As for us, we think far more of our own souls than we do of God."

"What is the difference, Scotia ?"

"Just the difference of thinking of yourself, and of forgetting self—the difference between the fear of hell and the love of God."

"Ring the bell, and let us have the Exercise ;" said

the Colonel sternly. He rose hastily from the table, and went to the reading desk, and began to turn with an affectionate reverence the leaves of *The Book*. And the men and maids came heavily in, and the psalm was sung. Then the Colonel passed over the regular portion, and selected the 18th chapter of *Acts*, and Scotia's face burned and she quivered with angry feeling, when she was compelled in her turn to read the 15th verse. But she was not convinced. On the contrary, the Roman Proconsul became at that hour one of her friends ; even on her knees she was inclined to defend him.

And her heart was wounded by this public defec-tion of her father. In all family troubles and disputes he was generally on her side ; why had he forsaken her this night ? Was he suspicious of the tender feel-ing between Angus Bruce and herself ? If so, he ought to have understood her suffering and her irri-tability, and given her sympathy. And so the calm, holy tones of her father praying, did not comfort or soothe her. She thought he had been unkind. And oh ! the behavior of Angus was strange and unkind enough.

But afterward, when he bade her "good-night," when he drew her within his arm, and held her close to his heart, when his full eyes sought hers, and he kissed her twice, she went out of the room with a smile ; with her head lifted, and her soul full of comfort.

III.

BLAIR RODNEY ARRIVES.

“I marked all kindred powers the heart finds fair :—
Truth with awed lips ; and Hope, with eyes upcast ;
And Fame, whose loud wings fan the ashen Past
To signal fires :
Love’s throne was not with these ; but far above
All passionate wind of welcome and farewell ;
He sat in breathless bowers they dream not of ;
Though Truth foreknow Love’s heart, and Hope foretell ;
And Fame be for Love’s sake desirable.” —*Rosetti*,

BLAIR RODNEY came the next morning. His letter of the preceding evening had put aside immediate expectation, he had been forgotten except by Bertha, and the surprise he had pleased himself with arranging appeared to be complete. The Colonel was in his morning sleep ; Mrs. Rodney was with her housekeeper ; Scotia had gone to Kirk-Logie. Only Bertha was prepared to receive him. For the vague letter had not deceived her. The smallness of her own mind enabled her to anticipate and follow such petty maneuvers.

Just before noon-hour, the young man came ; and he was not disappointed in the sensation his arrival caused. The exclamations, the hurrying hospitality, the welcomes, and the apologies which attend unexpected arrivals, he had them all. And Bertha added her little pinch to the incense burned in his honor, though she

was wondering all the time what pleasure he found in the temporary excitement, to compensate him for the writing of unnecessary letters, and a whole night in the small tavern in Rodney village.

Her own plan before a visit was to have everything well understood. She liked servants and a carriage waiting her arrival ; and she preferred stepping out of it into a household full of pleasant anticipations of her visit. Improvised meals, hurriedly prepared rooms, and plans already formed, without reference to her presence and pleasure, did not do her justice.

But then her cousin was a man, and men—as women of all ages have found out—are sometimes queer. As he was eating his breakfast, she sat demurely busy with her needle, watching him. He was talking to his hostess, and therefore Bertha had plenty of opportunity to make a transient appraisalment of his qualities. She found him good-looking enough. Thoughtful people might have said that his head was too small, but then he was remarkably tall and sinewy ; and it was likely that the tales they had heard of his leaping and running, his walking and golf-playing, were correct. He looked precisely like an athlete, who could march up to a five-barred gate, put his hand on the topmost rail, and vault lightly over it. This was said to be an ordinary feat of Blair Rodney, and Bertha felt that she would like to see him perform it.

Scotia had supposed that his talk would be of bullocks and sheep, and agricultural games and fairs. On the contrary, he talked only of family and kirk matters. After the first questions and answers on subjects relating entirely to the Rodneys, Blair plunged enthusiastically into the controversy between the Kirk and the State. He did not seem to care for

any other subject, but on this one he was bigoted and passionate and intolerant of all who were not as one-sided as himself.

"How is your minister on the question?" had been one of his first inquiries. And when he was told that Angus Bruce had as yet taken no decided part, his scorn for such a position was measureless. "If ever the Kirk needed her sons to stand by her, it was at the present hour! He, for one, would never desert her! All he had was hers, etc., etc."

In the middle of such a confession of faith, Angus Bruce entered, and the Colonel came in with him. A lull in the theological discussion followed, but Bertha saw that Blair Rodney was impatient to renew his favorite argument, and with a pretty modesty, she said:

"My cousin was explaining to us, father, the position of the State as regards the Kirk. He has made me feel as if the Kirk was very unreasonable."

"I mean to say, sir, that the decrees of the great courts of the kingdom are not to be set aside by a presbytery or two. The laws must be obeyed, even by clergymen!"

He looked defiantly at Angus Bruce, and Angus answered:

"This is not the age of Nebuchadnezzar, Mr. Rodney. He might indeed send forth his couriers to the one hundred and twenty provinces of his empire, all bearing precisely the same ecclesiastical edict—but Her Majesty Victoria has no such power."

"She is the lawful head of the Church."

"I say nothing of the English Church. The Scotch Kirk can have no head, nor any superior in things spiritual but her Lord, Jesus Christ."

"I am with you on that point, Mr. Bruce ;" said the Colonel, and he spoke with a decision that could not be gainsayed—"but the Kirk of Scotland is beyond our guiding ; and as for Victoria, I am her ever faithful servant ! Dr. Chalmers——"

"Dr. Chalmers," interrupted Blair, with some passion—"Dr. Chalmers would fly in the face of Providence, or any other creature who did not think his thoughts, and say 'Amen !' to his prelections."

"I think, Blair, that Dr. Chalmers has a great commission."

"And he rides on the very top of it, sir."

"So he should, so he should ! You must know, Blair, that passive obedience is for the army. It is a doctrine the Presbyterian Kirk could never abide."

"Well, but, sir——"

"Tut, tut, Blair ! You want to keep up your threep like a game-cock, and it will not do in private life. Let us go into the fields, and see what the men are doing. I have one now, called Jock Lowther, a prince among plowmen. It will do you good to see his rigs and furrows, they are as straight as if he made them with a ruler. Jock got his insight from the border farmers about crops and plowing. You cannot beat them in managing a field."

Blair took the suggestion pleasantly. He rose up and shook his big form as a big dog shakes himself when disturbed. And as he went out of the room he gave Bertha a smile, which she accepted, and then transferred to Angus Bruce. For Angus had declined the tramp through the fields and plantations. He was restless and unhappy, and whenever men are in this mood, their instinct leads them to the society of women.

"Scotia has gone to Kirk-Logie," she said sweetly. "She goes a great deal to Kirk-Logie. Do you know the Cupars?"

"I have heard of Gilchrist Cupar." He spoke in a tone of disapproval, for Gilchrist had an evil reputation. He did not ask if Scotia went to the Cupars, he took the fact for granted, upon the suggestion of Bertha's question. And Bertha said no more, there was no need; she perceived that the minister had instantly given place in his heart to the thought she had sown there.

"Was Miss Rodney aware that your cousin was coming to-day?"

It was not a question he had a right to ask, and so Bertha knew why he had compelled himself to ask it. "There was a letter from Cousin Blair," she answered. "I understood from it he might be here to-day."

She told the exact truth, and yet in telling it, insinuated an absolute lie. What does a jealous woman require, except words? With them she can do anything. Then she turned the subject upon matters specially interesting to the minister. She asked for instruction on points in his last Sabbath sermons. She inquired timidly as to those he would preach next. She listened, as men love women to listen, humbly, admiringly, with their hearts in their faces. Angus did not feel himself to be in any danger from such homage, and yet it comforted and pleased him.

For he was as unhappy as a man must be, who loves where both honor and interest forbid him to love. Nor could he plead that he had been taken unawares, or had fallen ignorantly into that divine depth of foolishness, which he ought to have avoided. For as soon as Colonel Rodney saw him, the father

understood, and the man understood, that there was danger, and with a soldier's directness, he had informed the young minister of his plans with regard to his daughters and their cousin Blair. It had been very kindly and delicately done ; and Bruce had as delicately and positively expressed his comprehension of the situation, and his regard for it.

If the Colonel had said in so many words, "I am your patron; I have presented you to this charge; I have made you understand that my daughters are virtually engaged women; I shall honor you as my spiritual teacher and my guest, and shall expect you to honor and respect my family arrangements," no clearer comprehension of the position could have been arrived at.

And Bruce believed himself to be strong enough to keep his promise to the last tittle that gratitude and inviolable integrity demanded. He had resolved to be blind to beauty and deaf to its charming, and then in a moment—when he was utterly unprepared for such a revelation, his heart spoke, and he knew that he had been a traitor to his word, ever since the first hour when Scotia Rodney put her hand into his.

The knowledge of his love and his faithlessness came together. Love opened his eyes and touched his lips, and compelled him to speak. Honor laid an imperative finger upon them, and compelled him to be silent. The two feelings made his soul a battle-ground. They strove like giants for the mastery, and Angus knew well that victory for either side could only come through long and bitter conflict. For spiritual men love with an intensity purely material men have no conception of. Their love is satisfied with the body. The spiritual man will have nothing less than body

and soul of the beloved. Not only flesh of his flesh, but thought of his thought, hope of his hope, faith of his faith, and all—love, thought, hope, faith—striking their roots into those immortal instincts which claim eternity, because they are able to anticipate it.

And yet, for this very reason, Angus was afraid of his love. The soul of Scotia often irritated him. It soared above and beyond his approval. It was too large, too free, too daring, even in its aspirations and its worship. It attracted, and it repelled him. And because he often left her presence angry at her spiritual presumption, he fancied he was in no danger from her great physical beauty. Then, after all, it had been her personal loveliness which had forced speech from him. He knew it was her radiant countenance, her glorious hair, her charming figure, her gracious manner, even that air of distinction which proclaimed her noble birth, that had intoxicated his senses. And he told himself the blunt truth, without excuses.

"It was no spiritual love, Angus Bruce, that made you false to your promise. It was the lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; and you had no thought, at that moment, of the pure and fervent soul that informed and irradiated the body." It was thus he talked to himself during the midnight hours; thus that he stood and accused himself before the bar of heaven. And if his Calvinistic faith permitted him no pretenses and no extenuation, it also imparted to him the comfort which flows from the persistence of the Divine mercy. He was undoubtedly the child of grace, and he cried out against the accuser in a holy triumph of assurance, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

It was one feature of this first hard battle with him-

self, that he never permitted the image of Scotia to come between his idea of duty and his resolves for the future. He would not allow himself to be weakened by it. He must do right regardless of human feelings; for his audit would have to be settled with a just God, and not with a woman whose love had the witchery of earth in it, and whose opinions were very often outside the circle of authorized beliefs.

And all through the same midnight, Scotia was sending him thoughts steeped in tenderness, whispering his name—not on her lips—but with a charming modesty deep in her heart. She was wondering over his sudden coldness, finding excuses for it; hoping, fearing, questioning every look and word, asking herself if she had been mistaken, telling herself that it was impossible. Ah, this is the vigil of love! to have but one thought, to turn it a thousand ways, till the sleep of exhaustion puts an end to the monotonous torture.

In the morning Scotia's first thought was Angus Bruce, and the first thought of Angus Bruce was Scotia Rodney. Scotia longed to be alone: she mounted her pony and went early to ride. She knew that among the hills and by the sea-side, there were solitudes and consolations she needed. Angus, with the courage of his faith and his race, determined to face his temptation, and so facing, conquer it.

But he did not meet Scotia in her home, and there was no necessity for him to go out of his way in order to provoke anew the struggle of the night. He might have rested himself on the fact of his resolution, and accepted the excuse which Fate had provided for him. He did not do so. When he left Bertha he turned at once into the Kirk-Logie road. It was a beautiful

road at all times, but specially so in its full spring glory ; and although Angus Bruce was more accustomed to see God through his Bible and his conscience, than through the operations of nature, he could not remain insensible to her soothing and elevating influence. The overshadowing trees, the plowman whistling among the furrows, the daisy-sprinkled meadows, the distant woods opening ravishing perspectives of green carpets watered by broken lights, all whispered " peace " to his restless heart.

He turned his sensitive face hither and thither, and lifted it skyward, and naturally as a bird sings, he said :

" For whom are these celestial beams ?
These perfumed airs ?
This verdure of the fields ?
This murmur of the hedges ?
These many-colored clouds ?
For whom do the flowers adorn themselves ?
For whom do the birds sing ?
And the spring mount from all roots,
And rise to all cymes ?
Even for thine own children, Lord ! "

And then there flashed into his mind the assertion that God caused his sun to shine and his rain to fall, upon the righteous and the unrighteous ; and being a man who looked at a thought straight in the face, and not at its side angles and mysterious foreshortenings, he speedily lost himself in the wonder, " why God had not made the gift of His grace equally universal ? " For though he was a schoolman and a theologian, he had that sincerity which works through layers of creeds, to the core of truth beneath.

And as he stepped slowly to this mental process, he was yet aware of the motive that had brought him so

far, and his ears were consciously listening for the sound of a horse's hoofs. He knew the pace at which Scotia rode, the swift, even gallop which only slackened at the foot of Rodney Hill. He had often stood to watch her. He liked to see her wave her hand in response to his lifted hat, and to feel the fresh wind bring him the delicious scent of the woodruff, in the swift passing.

And such expectancy—even against his will—interrupted the grave thoughts to which he was trying to bring the whole force of his intellect. Suddenly, though there was not a sound but a bird's song, his heart stood still. He had just turned the angle of a wood, and he looked sharply down the road. Scotia had tied her horse to a gate, and was sitting upon the ground near it. Her back was toward him, her head bent tenderly over something, which Angus was sure she held in her hand. His logical reasoning failed him in a moment : he forgot his premises and his deductions, and found himself wondering "if she was reading a letter or looking at a trinket." Insensibly he hurried his steps, and as soon as Scotia heard them she turned her head, and by its motion, invited his approach.

She was holding on her lap a little terrier that had been run over, and left to perish miserably by the roadside. The creature was quite sensible of her pity and her efforts to relieve its distress ; and its large, brown eyes, though full of suffering, were fixed upon her with gratitude and affection. As Angus reached her side, it closed them forever. And Scotia was weeping.

He laid the dead animal among the rushes by the stream, and said, rather awkwardly, some words of

sympathy to Scotia. She was hot with indignation at the man who had mangled his own dog, and left him to die without love or help. "He is one of your elders, Mr. Bruce, and you will let him carry the holy cup, and serve in the holy place, and count it no sin against him."

"I will most certainly reprove him severely for his want of mercy. But you have an exceptionally tender feeling for animals, Miss Rodney."

"Only pay them a little attention, Mr. Bruce, and you will also feel tenderly to animals. Look at Adam Gowrie's cattle ; with what silent good-humor they take his blows and his ill words ! And as for disease and death, men may learn from animals how to endure the one, and meet the other. Do they not retire apart, surround themselves with silence, and pass away as quietly as if they were going to sleep ?"

What could Angus answer ? He looked at her shining, sensitive face with troubled eyes and twitching lips, and said softly :

"You have just shown me a new corner of life. I will study it more in the future."

"Do. Take love with you, or you will not understand. But when I cannot reach the love of God, and cannot find rest in the love of human creatures, I go to the fields and the woods, and the birds and the animals never disappoint me."

Angus was untying her horse as she spoke, and Scotia stood by the upright bole of a young fir tree near them. The wind was coming landward from the sea, and she made Angus notice how the sapling steadied itself against the buffet. For it was yet so young a tree that a little bird lighted on it bent down the stem. It was a crested wren just from Norway,

and they stood and listened a few moments to its mysterious song. Then Angus assisted Scotia to her saddle, and as he did so, he said :

"Your cousin Blair Rodney arrived this morning."

"What is he like?"

"A very handsome man—I suppose. I think most people would consider him so."

"I did not ask if he was handsome. Is he pleasant, kindly, intelligent?"

"I cannot judge a man on instinct. His conversation was mostly on kirk matters."

"Is he for a Free Kirk?"

"Against it—very strongly,"

"I dare say he is an intolerant bigot. I hate a bigot!"

"In the moral world, there is no success without enthusiasm—that is bigotry. He thinks Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Buchanan bigots. But if ideals are to be translated into action, men must be willing to go to the stake, and rush to the battle-field for them. For this reason, Miss Rodney, atheism makes no converts. An atheist is without enthusiasm, and therefore without contagion."

"I understand. I can compare atheists with Covenanters and Puritans, and see the difference. Did my cousin convince you on any of the questions at issue?"

"No. Truth, with me, is the product of meditation, not of argument."

"Are you returning to Rodney House?"

"I am going forward to Kirk-Logie."

She held the reins in her hand and stood still, looking down into his upturned face. Was it possible that he had nothing more personal to say? No. He pretended to take a last look at her stirrup, and then, with

rather a somber smile, raised his hat and wished her a pleasant ride home. As he did so, the gentleness in her face vanished, she gathered her reins more firmly, and answering his wish with a haughty movement, rode rapidly out of sight.

The whole human nature of Angus was in revolt ; but it was a revolt destined to defeat. For over against the human nature of the man stood the spiritual nature ; and this nobler part never once contemplated its subjection to the former. He knew that he must suffer, and that he must fight, though it was a fight without hope. And he told himself at that hour that there could be no hope. If Blair Rodney had but the smallest amount of intelligence, he must see, and feel, the superiority of Scotia. She had a thousand excellencies that Bertha lacked. She had every charm a woman could have. In the sight of Angus, she had only one fault—an unauthorized and daring freedom of thought. There were times when even he—a trained minister—feared the words she let fall ; when he could not be rid of them, and they tortured him with new-found doubts and suppositions.

He walked onward to Kirk-Logie, though every step was heavy and reluctant ; and through the tumult raging in his heart, he heard distinctly the gallop of Scotia's horse on its rapid homeward way. He had come out purposely to meet her. He had fancied himself strong enough to undo by a calm, polite indifference, the two froward words of the preceding night ; and he felt that he had only succeeded in making the girl he so passionately loved understand and despise his motive. This was hard to bear, he could better endure Scotia's loss than her scorn and contempt.

It was far on in the afternoon when she reached her home. Mrs. Rodney and Bertha were in a small parlor set aside for privacy ; a place of rest and unrestraint, where no visitor was ever admitted, "Our cousin has come," said Bertha, with an affected little yawn. "Mother thinks he is quite gentlemanly, do you not, mother?"

"He is better than I expected. Your father was annoyed at your being from home, Scotia."

"I could not sit at home waiting for Blair Rodney, mother. It is five weeks since he threatened us with his visit. It has been hanging like an incubus over the house ever since."

"Were you at the Cupars'?"

"Why should I go there, Bertha?"

"I had an idea you were friendly."

"You must have invented the idea. I rode down to the sea-side, and along the sands for five miles, and coming home, I found Donald Begg's dog, dying. He had driven his wagon over it—and left it to die!"

"And, of course, you stayed with the dog?"

"I should think you would have done the same. It was so grateful for water."

She looked tired and depressed, and Mrs. Rodney told her "to lie down and rest. Your father will expect you to look handsome, Scotia, and you are really sun-burnt and jaded."

"I shall be all right, dear mother, by the time I am wanted. Where is father?"

"With Blair. I dare say they have gone to the Stone Pillar."

Scotia was eating a lunch beside her mother and sister, and she listened without much interest to their injunctions regarding her toilet. At the moment she

felt indifferent to her appearance. But as she lay with shut eyes in her own room, a mischievous sentiment of retaliation invaded her. Blair had been the cause of many a small annoyance, with his delays and his surprises. He had managed to invest his visit with an importance which it had no right to. And she was sure he considered himself irresistible, and expected Bertha to quarrel with her for his favor.

If it was possible she would make him feel the omnipotence of female beauty. She rose with a smile, and began her toilet with premeditated care. When it was finished, she had the light of certain victory on her face. She was no coquette, but she had reasons which seemed to her sufficient for the exercise of her natural power. "Blair Rodney's self-complacency needed discipline, and Angus Bruce!"—she set her lips sternly when she whispered his name—"Angus Bruce, he needed a lesson, also."

As she made these reflections, she was standing before her mirror. She looked at her lovely face, so dazzling white, so delicately pink; at her dark blue eyes; at her rosy lips. Then she turned slightly, to see how her hair fell lower than her waist, in waves of rippling, curling beauty, and how the pale blue silk of her dress hung in long folds of exquisite color and shimmer. All was perfect. She looked divinely grand and beautiful. But she smiled, and the smile undeified her. She had hardly understood her own countenance in its light. It reflected a Scotia Rodney that she did not know.

Coming down the great staircase, she saw her father and her cousin Blair passing through the hall. They stood still and waited for her; and in those few moments Blair Rodney had time sufficient to reach the

bottom of his heart. He had fallen into depths and depths of happily-complacent love. "This was the woman he had come to woo—the woman worthy of his love. How fortunate she should be the elder! And what a charming, affectionate little sister he might have in Bertha! Perhaps he could marry her to his friend, Colin Carnegie"—all these thoughts passed through his mind as he waited Scotia's approach. They went in to dinner together. Bertha took her father's arm and laughingly protested she had the handsomer escort.

No doubt of any kind troubled Blair. If the Colonel was satisfied, he was more than willing. The road to a happy fortune was therefore quite clear. He was in high spirits. He joked, and told funny stories, and sang "Cam' ye by Athole," and even offered to recite. He was rubicund and noisy, and full to overflowing of that spume of youth which makes the cheeks tingle with shame, when men remember, ten years afterward.

Late in the evening Angus Bruce came in, and Blair wanted to renew the Free Kirk controversy. But Scotia would not permit it. She took Blair aside, and held with him, and her mother and sister, a consultation about a picnic at the Stone Pillar. She sang to him. She easily induced him to sing to her. She was beautifully gracious and charming with him, but with Angus Bruce she was totally changed. No one but Angus could see or feel the change; no one but Scotia knew she had made him feel it; but oh! to him, how bitter was the indefinable difference! And as for her, the revenge was still sweet in her mouth. A woman who is in love, and is angry with her lover, may have a con-

science ; but it has miraculous fits of absence. That night Scotia's conscience did not trouble her. If she had asked it anything about the minister's misery, it would have answered—"I know nothing about it ! I was not there !"

IV.

A POLKA AND ITS RESULTS.

"O, philosophers, go in quest of pleasure !
Find us amusements without brutality or
Folly ; and enjoyments without selfishness."

"Love works miracles."

"Her soul is absorbed in her own breast,
She is the prey of her passions."

THE summer inaugurated by this evening was one of great apparent gayety, but of much real heart-sickness, jealousy, and anxiety. Blair Rodney was the only person thoroughly satisfied with the position of affairs ; his measureless self-complacency stood as firm as a pyramid on the desert. He had just tact enough to feel that occasional absence was an advantage, though he never perceived that his frequent visits to Edinburgh were regarded as a great relief. For every one, in some key or other, was at a strained and unnatural pitch, and the home life suffered that constant disarrangement which follows a selfish, complacent young man as surely as his shadow.

As for Angus Bruce, he ceased very soon to take any active part in the new life introduced by Blair Rodney's visit. Indeed, he seriously disapproved of it ; and was grieved and astonished that the Colonel and Mrs. Rodney submitted to such a marked and continued interference with the calm, regular habits

of so many years. At first, in pursuance of his resolve not to run away from temptation, he accompanied the young people in their riding, walking, and picnicking. And it pleased the Colonel and Mrs. Rodney that he should do so ; for it secured a degree of order and decency in the pursuit of pleasure which Blair's boisterous, braggadocio temper was continually apt to infringe.

But it was not long before Angus felt the effort to be beyond his strength. The heartache and humiliations, the wounded love and passionate jealousy which were to bear—without sign or consolation—were an intolerable mental suffering. And they brought him no spiritual strength or comfort :

“I am going a warfare on which I am not sent, therefore God gives me neither weapons nor grace for it.” He came to this decision one night, after an unusually painful scene, in which for the first time he had been wounded in his office as well as in his person.

For as Blair identified himself with the Rodney family, he introduced many changes into the life at Rodney House. The spacious parlors of the fine old mansion were soon a place of rendezvous for the young people of the neighborhood ; and the stately repose which had been its atmosphere, was invaded by sounds long unfamiliar to its echoes—laughter, and song, and love-making ; the delirious melody of reels and strathspeys, and the merry beating of light feet to them.

To a man of Angus Bruce's convictions, who looked upon life as the price of eternity, this constant hilarity was painful. It brought no smile to his grave face. It filled his heart with sorrow and disapproval. But it was Blair Rodney's hour, and he was soon aware

that no one was inclined to interfere with Blair. The Colonel thought the young man's riotous mirth the natural outcome of his fine health and spirits. Mrs. Rodney was captivated by the sounds of the Highland dances. They recalled her own youth and her childhood's home, and she could see no harm in an amusement, which, however gay, had a national sanction.

"I used to dance a foursome reel as light as any one," she said, with a sigh; "and a strathspey could set my heart and feet on fire."

About the end of June, Blair returned from a short visit to Edinburgh, and he brought back with him the polka. It was a new dance then, and one which was turning society upside down. Nothing like it had ever been seen in England or Scotland, and there was a perfect furor for polka-dancing. The little jacket which was introduced with it, the dotted dress, and trimmed boots were irresistible. Scotia and Bertha fell completely under the Slavic spell, and there was no talk in Rodney House that did not in some way refer to the new dance, or the new dress.

It shared Blair's heart with the Free Kirk controversy, and his matrimonial prospects. Walking, riding, and every other pleasure and employment were laid aside, in order to practice the polka-step, and devise dresses in which to perform the new dance. And it satisfied Blair's ambition to be its introducer and teacher, and to have the young ladies from Carsloch, and Braithness, and Locherdale his pupils. For a week or two, it really seemed as if the whole duty of men and women was to learn to dance the polka.

The 11th of July was the anniversary of the Colonel's wedding day. There was to be a dinner party, and Angus Bruce was included among the guests. He had

no excuse for declining the invitation, nor did he really wish to do so. Many gentlemen of years and high position would be present; many ladies whose age would preclude the introduction of daffing and dancing. It was likely the Kirk controversy would fully occupy the hearts of all sensible people. He had himself come to a decision on the question, and was eager to announce it. Other ministers would be present, and for once Blair Rodney would not be permitted to override and overrule everything.

Never had he thought Scotia so beautiful. It was the first time that he had seen her in white. She took his breath away, when she entered leaning upon Blair's arm, dressed in a long robe of shining white satin. And he noticed that the Colonel looked proudly at the couple, and then let his glance wander to him, as if asking his approval and sympathy. How could he give it? No; he vowed to his heart he would never be so false to its longing and its suffering. Bertha came in with Sir Thomas Carr. She was in a glow of soft pink crape, with lilies at her breast and in her smooth black hair. But Angus scarcely noticed her; his eyes were full of Scotia.

The dinner passed much as he had expected, and the Kirk controversy spiced all its generous courses. Blair led the State party, and defended its policy with all the intemperate zeal of undisciplined years. Angus said nothing, until provoked by his sneering assertion that "the Minister of Rodney Law was a wise man, who wouldn't 'go over the Border' till he knew where he was going to."

Then Angus had his opportunity, and he used it with perhaps an unmerciful power. But he saw a light, a spark, in Scotia's eyes, which touched his lips

with fire. The men around the table were as stubble before its flame. He held their opinions and thoughts by the majesty of his own, and made every one but Blair rise to their feet in an enthusiasm of sympathy for a Free Kirk. Bertha and some other ladies were crying softly when he finished his magnificent plea ; but the steady gleam in Scotia's eyes was an allegiance worth far more to Angus Bruce.

All rose from the table when he finished speaking. They were too full of feeling to sit still. But in a few moments the reaction came, and the Laird of Fernie, a round, rosy old man, said plaintively :

"We hae forgotten oor toddy ! Did ony one hear tell o' the like ? I wad gie a pretty thing to hear what auld Andrew Agnew wad say, anent sic a like lapse o' dinner duty. He wad hae called us a' to order."

"He would that," said Gilchrist Cupar. "For at the finest dinner, he is always in a hurry for the toddy. The dessert puts him in a passion—women's stuff, he calls it ; and when the cheese comes in, you should hear him rattle off as fast as he can speak—'Ye for cheese ? Ye for cheese ? Ye for cheese ? Naebody for cheese. Tak' awa' the cheese, Sandy, and bring in the wee kettle.'"

And Gilchrist imitated the old gentleman so cleverly and so good-naturedly that every one laughed heartily ; feeling it, after all, rather a good thing to get away from such high considerations as the Kirk and the State, to the more humble and comfortable ones of the wee kettle and the toddy.

But none of the young men but Gilchrist stopped for the toddy. "They are just drunk with their new-fangled dance," he said, as he drew his tumbler toward him. "I take such things in moderation ; and

yet I am apt to join the ladies after the second glass. As Sir Andrew says—‘the young men o’ these days are just effeeminate.’ ”

The influence of the minister’s speech was not, however, to be put quite away. In a short time every one rose and went to the picture gallery, where the ladies had already gathered. They were standing in picturesque groups, and Blair was going from one to the other, talking in a manner which indicated some annoyance. In fact, the fiddlers had not come, and the dancers were impatiently waiting and speculating as to the cause of their delay.

Angus cast his eyes down the long hall in search of Scotia. For the desire of the moth for the light is not greater than the longing of the heart for its love ; dangerous, fatal, though it may be. He found her very quickly, but she was quite a different Scotia from the vision he carried in his eyes. Her long pearly robe had been exchanged for a short skirt of vivid scarlet and a little jacket of black velvet. A square cap of velvet was upon her fair hair, and her feet were shod in boots trimmed with fur. All the young ladies were in a similar costume, but Angus saw none of them but Scotia. She looked ravishing, and yet he hated the dress ; and hated to see her in it. Some one tried to play the peculiar startling melody on the piano, and instantly Blair and Scotia were executing the fascinating movement. Angus tried to shut his eyes—to tear himself away—to escape that enthrallment of his senses, which, with inexpressibly soft, delicious languors, was creeping over him.

Fortunately his anger was quickly roused. He had seen Scotia and her cousin Blair dancing before, but it was in that mathematical dawdling which is called

a "quadrille"; or else in the merry, characteristic movements of the national dances; and his sense of the sin of dancing had been limited to the waste of time it involved. But this polkaing admitted of a familiarity that offended all his views of maidenly propriety. Scotia's short dress, her lifting feet, her flushed face, and sparkling eyes were evidences of a physical excitement, dangerous and wicked. He was on the point of leaving the room when the piano suddenly ceased, and Scotia, in a hurried and slightly imperative manner, called his name.

He turned, but still stood within the open door, holding it so, as if only half-willing to meet her. She came toward him hurriedly:

"Are you going home, Mr. Bruce?"

"Yes. Why should I stay here to see you make a mock of what is lovely in womanhood?"

"Sir! I think you are—impertinent!" She said the word after a moment's hesitation, as if she had added mentally, "I do not care if it does offend you."

"I did not wish to be impertinent. It is my duty, sometimes, to say an unpleasant thing."

"Very well; you have said it. Now do us a favor. The fiddlers have not come, and we are waiting. As you pass the 'Rodney Arms' see if they are there, and bid them hurry."

He looked with a stern indignation into her face while she spoke. Before she had finished her request she felt as if every word burnt her tongue.

"Miss Rodney, as your friend, I refuse to call anything that will help you to do wrong. As your minister, I refuse a commission that will degrade my office and dishonor my Master. You have deeply wronged yourself by your request."

So he left her, and after a moment's hesitation she opened the door and followed him. Her pride was all in arms. She would not be lectured by Angus Bruce, if he *was* her minister. But he never turned his head as he walked slowly down the stairs, and after she had taken half a dozen steps, her courage failed; she could remember nothing to say, and she was afraid of that stern, white face, with its solemn eyes.

And her dress, also! She caught sight of her figure in one of the long glass panels of the corridor, and she felt ashamed. Was she the same woman, that her best self had approved a few hours ago, in the long gown of pearly satin? No. She felt that she was not the same; that something indefinable, something she could not bear to lose, had been put off; and that something she would not like to retain had been assumed.

No woman is always at her best, and Scotia was often enough subject to those contradictions of will and conduct, which made her so difficult to comprehend. She had all the faults which were the shadows of her virtues. In her nature the gold and the clay were thoroughly mingled. She loved all that was noble and good, and yet, with a conscious willfulness, very frequently did what was contemptible and bad.

After she had so scornfully driven away the minister, she went to the private parlor and sat down there. Her thoughts were rapid, her decisions very closely followed them. In a few minutes she sent for Bertha and told her she was not well, and felt unfit to remain any longer with their company. "You must fill my place and your own also, Bertha, and do not let Blair, or the Braithmoss girls, or anybody else, trouble me. I want to be alone. I am sick of so much company.

It is simply dreadful to spend life dancing, and eating, and making love, and telling jokes."

"Well, dear, you know the rest of us have not yet found that out. I am sorry you are sick and weary. You will be better in the morning."

"Very likely, if you will keep every one away."

Bertha was quite willing to do so. She felt something depressing was lifted from her by Scotia's absence, and the other young women had a similar sense of relief. Scotia's great beauty, her high spirits, her air of authority, her position as eldest daughter, overshadowed their paler pretensions. The absence of so marked an individuality gave to every one of them a feeling of fuller life. They would no longer be measured by Scotia Rodney, and found wanting. Even Blair was more of Blair than he felt himself if Scotia's eyes were upon him.

For such reasons the noblest woman in any set need never hope or fear that she will be missed from its counsels, or its merry-making. Virtues, accomplishments, beauty above the average, bring their possessor only a nominal repute. In reality, every woman less good, less gifted, less lovely, hates her for her evident superiority.

Bertha, having gone away, Scotia sat still until her mother's visit was over. Mrs. Rodney advised her daughter to take some simple medicine, and go to her room; and Scotia was apparently very willing to accept the advice. But as soon as her solitude had been secured, she was a different girl. She threw off with a passionate contempt her Polish dress, and put on in its place the gray winsey in which her daily walks were taken, a long gray mantle of the same cloth, and her rough, straw, gypsy bonnet. Then

she put out the dim light by which she had made this simple toilet, and stood by the window looking into the dark grounds, as she slowly drew on her gloves.

Softly, by rooms and stairways well known to her, she reached the garden. The visitors were either dancing or playing whist ; the servants were watching the new dance. No one gave her a moment's thought. Even those who loved her were satisfied in the belief that she was within the healing influences of darkness and rest.

The soft, cool night ! Oh, how heavenly, how holy, how comforting was its influence ! There was no moon, and no sound, and the air was full of the sweet, wandering souls of a thousand flowers. But Scotia noticed nothing that nature said to her. She walked swiftly through the garden, and through the dark park, and down the lane that led to the manse. When she arrived there, she hesitated a moment. For the first time she let herself contemplate the thing she was about to do.

There was a solitary candle on a table in the manse parlor, and as she approached the door, she could see it. A trembling uncertainty seized her. She was heart-sick with the doubt of it.

"Either go back, or go forward, Scotia Rodney," her soul said imperatively to her. "Do as you desire, but *do* it."

Then she went forward, and knocked once at the closed door.

Angus Bruce was sitting with his arms clasped above his head, and his face lifted into the shadows of the room. His body was quite still, but his soul was wandering upon a dark and lonely road. The mists of sorrow had gathered around him, he was going into

cloud after cloud of them. He heard the knock, and it brought him sharply back to his duty. He lifted the candle and listened a moment. Old Grizel's rheumatism was bad, Adam's sight was failing him, there was no movement in the kitchen ; he went to the door himself.

He supposed that some one of his parishioners was ill,—a child perhaps, who was not baptized,—and his mind was set to the necessary key. When, therefore, he saw in the gloom outside the white, lovely face of Scotia Rodney, he was speechless in his amazement.

“ May I come in a moment, Mr. Bruce.”

His lips moved, and he closed the door and went with her into the parlor. But he could find no words. He knew that the hour of temptation had come to him, and in the first moments of it his soul was afraid. And his manner was solemn and distant ; how could Scotia know that there was a heart of unflaming fire behind it ?

She felt that she must hurry, or lose command over herself. Nervously fingering the strings of her bonnet with one hand, and holding her mantle tight with the other, she said quickly, almost abruptly :

“ Mr. Bruce, I was very rude to you. I am very sorry. I could not rest until I told you so. Forgive me !”

At the first words her eyes were dropped, but with a sudden determination she lifted them to his face. It was an almost stern face they rested on, but a look of trouble came into it as she spoke.

“ All that I can forgive, I forgave at once.”

“ I was in a passion, and I was unkind. I wounded a noble heart without caring, but immediately I was angry at myself.”

“ I think the passing unkindness of the passionate,

is perhaps more kind than the wisdom of those who are always calm and indifferent. People who have no faults are terrible."

"I am forgiven, then? Quite?"

"Yes."

He could say no more—he durst say no more. To give his heart speech, would be like the letting out of water. He said "yes," and cast his eyes upon the open book on the table. For her lovely face, sensitive with feeling, her sorrowful eyes, seeking his for some sympathy, the slight flush and disorder of her hurried walk, appealed to him with a power that made him tremble with the strain. His heart beat with fierce throbs; in his ears the reverberation was like the regular blows of a great hammer. A moment's silence in such circumstances is a long time; Scotia endured it a moment, and then said wearily:

"Thank you! I will go home, then."

"I will walk with you. You should not have come alone—in the dark—so late."

"If I had waited for company—for the light—for to-morrow morning, I might never have come at all. Have I done wrong?"

"No."

"Have I done right?"

"Yes. But I will walk back with you."

He lifted his hat, and they went together into the night. A great peace was between them. He drew her hand within his arm, and they walked on through the lonely lane and the darker park into the sweet garden, quiet and happy, as if they were walking in a dream. Suddenly from the thick woods there rose a song; mysterious, solemn, heavenly, sweet, and joyful.

"It is a nightingale!" said Scotia. "He is singing to his mate."

She spoke very softly. They were within the garden, standing in a lonely walk, bordered with roses. To both had come at the same moment the thought that there they must say "Good night." Bruce lifted his hat. Scotia pulled, in an apparently purposeless manner, a couple of white roses. She laid her hand again upon his arm, her eyes, luminous as those of a child, caught his eyes; her face, fair, sweet, loving, was the only thing he could see. Almost in a whisper she spoke:

"Forgive me, again."

"Scotia Rodney! Oh, Scotia! Scotia!" and he took the roses from her hand, and kissing them passionately, turned abruptly from her, and walked with rapid steps into the darkness.

She stood still, smiling. His swift footsteps had music in them. "He loves me! He loves me! He loves me!" All the secret way to her room she kept repeating the words: "He loves me! And I will make him say so! What words in life could be half so sweet! For I love him! I think I have always loved him. There are faces one dreams of in childhood. I used to dream of Angus Bruce. To-night I know that I love him. The moment I had spoken insolently I wanted to say so. Those cruel words were like the rude pushing open of a door. They let me into my own heart. What a strange night! Love—at least the knowledge of love—has come to me, as it comes to most, I think—at a moment unexpected and by a road never looked for.

She was undressing herself to such thoughts. The company were leaving. She knew that she must

hasten her night toilet, or Bertha would be full of questions she did not intend to answer that night. She made haste, and lay down in the darkness and tranquillity, and smiled happily to herself when she remembered the minister's face and his quick theft of her roses, and the kiss he gave them as he hastened from her presence.

"The kiss was my kiss! I will let the roses keep it a little while. He will kiss them again and again, and tell them how much he loves me; and to-morrow I will ask him for the roses. I will say, 'Perhaps they may hold a secret that ought to be mine.'"

The clock struck midnight, and then she noticed that the house was quiet, and that all the gay, noisy "farewells" of departing guests were over. So Bertha was not coming to see her that night; she could go to sleep and dream of Angus Bruce. Very likely Bertha was already asleep.

On the contrary, Bertha was wide awake, for there had came to her a new idea, an overpowering desire and determination. It had been stirring in her heart for some weeks, but it had suddenly taken form, assumed an imperative attitude. Scotia's retirement from the festival had revealed to her in the clearest possible manner the pleasure of being first and foremost. It was delightful to be deferred to, to be consulted, to usurp the enviable homage of Blair Rodney. Among the young people, she had that night felt herself mistress of Rodney, and a determined ambition to reach that position took possession of her.

Now, when Bertha Rodney had a desire, she gave neither herself, nor any other creature able to forward it, any rest until her interests were considered. Mrs.

Rodney was weary, but Bertha followed her to her room and fretted her into a discussion of the worry which kept her young heart awake and anxious.

"You see, mother, I cannot sleep. All my future is at Scotia's mercy ; and you know how Scotia is—so unreliable. One day, I think she has made up her mind to marry Blair ; and I try to imagine Sir Thomas will suit me better than Blair ; and then the next day, she is positively rude to Blair ; and Blair comes to me for comfort, and I think my chances as good as Scotia's. It may be fun for Scotia to play with a lover and a sister, like a cat with two mice ; but I do not enjoy it—nor does Blair."

"Why, then, does not Blair put an end to Scotia's game by asking her the direct question, which would compel her to say ' Yes ' or ' No ' ?"

"Because he is afraid. I really think father advises him about Scotia, and you might advise me, mother. No one cares for me much, but you."

"Do not say anything like that, Bertha. Your father and I love both our children equally. You must guard against such imprudent speech."

"Yes, dear mother, but what must I do ?"

"You wish to marry Blair, and be heiress of Rodney Law ? Speak sincerely."

"Yes, I do."

"There is just one way to insure your desire. Go to your sister. Tell her you love Blair, and want to be his wife. Tell her you are made miserable by her indecision, and throw yourself upon Scotia's love and generosity."

"Will she do as I wish ?"

"Do you know Scotia so little as to doubt it. If you trust her, you may rely on Scotia Rodney to the

last thing she can do for you, and the last farthing she can give you."

Mrs. Rodney's face was somber and a little sad; and she spoke as if she did not altogether approve her own advice.

"Mother, would you be sorry, if I married Blair?"

"No, I think it best you should marry Blair. The family will be well served in every material way by Blair. You will make him a good wife; Scotia would quarrel with him. And Scotia may do much better. Your father can give her a little money, and I have a plan for securing her a season in London. Scotia is handsome enough to become a duchess."

Women are unreadable even to themselves. Some impulse, which Mrs. Rodney did not analyze, made her find a certain pleasure in giving Bertha this little pang of jealousy—in making her feel that she did not sanction her advance to Mistress of Rodney House, without considering, also, the interests of her sister. It might be only a lawful and proper desire to snub Bertha's selfishness, and yet there might be, deeper still, an unacknowledged dislike to the vision of a future mistress of Rodney. For such a vision implied not only the death of her husband, but also her own removal to her dower house, in order to make way for the new mistress. And in such case, a woman's own daughter, though better than a stranger, must be in some measure a supplanter.

Bertha noticed the tone and the matter of her mother's speech. It annoyed her very much. "I thought," she said moodily, "you would care for my worry and anxiety, mother."

"I do care for it. But I care also for your sister's interests."

"And if I marry Blair, you are going to give her a season in London? You never thought of such a thing for me, mother."

"I shall have to take upon myself a great humiliation, in order to secure for Scotia a proper chaperone. And only Scotia's great beauty makes such a trial worth facing. I do not think you would succeed at Court. Marry Blair Rodney if you can. It is as great fortune as you can expect, Bertha. You see, I speak with sincerity to you."

"With great sincerity."

"It is very late—too late to fence with words to-night. Indeed, at the last, if advice is worth anything, it must come to just such plain words."

"Tell me one thing, mother—who is it you are going to ask to chaperone Scotia in London? And why is the asking a great humiliation?"

"I am going to ask my sister, Lady Yarrow; and it is a great humiliation, because we have not spoken or written a word to each other for thirty-five years." Mrs. Rodney's face was gray and angry, and she rose hastily, and began to prepare herself for rest.

"I am sorry I asked you, mother."

"Well, Bertha, it is not pleasant to rake the ashes of memory. And your Aunt Yarrow is a queer woman. Whether she would accept my late offer of reconciliation, and whether, if she did, Scotia would be any better for her friendship, I cannot tell. It is a doubt with me—a long doubt—a doubt for the chin to rest itself upon the palm of the hand. Good-night, child."

"Shall I go to Scotia to-night?"

"Have some patience with your fortune. To-morrow will surely do."

V.

A MESS OF POTTAGE.

“ Hard state of life ! If Heaven foreknows my will,
Why am I not tied up from doing ill ?
Why am I trusted with myself at large ?
When He’s more able to sustain the charge.”

“ Prudence ! thou vainly in our youth art sought,
And with age purchased are too dearly bought.”

“ Promises, once made, are past debate,
And truth’s of more necessity than fate.”

BREAKFAST at Rodney House was a very informal meal, served as each member of the family, or each guest desired it. On the following morning, Scotia was the earliest claimant. She came into the small parlor with the sunrise, dressed for riding, and looking exceedingly handsome and happy. For in those days a lady’s riding dress was a very becoming toilet, and not, as it is now, the very ugliest costume she can put on. Scotia’s long habit of dark blue broadcloth fitted her fine figure to perfection, and was long enough to be lifted gracefully over her left arm. There was a little linen collar at the throat, closed with a strip of pale blue silk, tied in a hunting knot. Her hair was beautifully coiled, and in her hand she carried a soft cap of blue cloth, trimmed with one long plume of the same color.

Rarely had she looked so radiant, so full of life and

joy. Some lavish planet had surely reigned when she was born, and made her of mould kindred to heaven. She seemed to be a part of the sunshine, and of the morning-glory, with its scent and song and sweetness. The butler gave her with pleasure the service she desired. He was an old man who had been a corporal in the Colonel's regiment in India ; and Scotia, with a natural tact born of a gentle heart, always gave him the title he had won.

"Good-morning, Corporal Scott ! Can you let me have some breakfast, early as it is ?"

"Ony gude thing ye like, Miss Rodney. A bit o' kippered salmon, and a poached egg, and buttered toast, and the marmalade, and the like o' that ?"

"And a cup of tea also, Corporal."

He brought all with a delightful officiousness, and watched her enjoyment of the meal with an air of satisfaction. And it gave him a great deal of pleasure to see her mount her pony and ride away alone. The groom was waiting to attend her, but he was dismissed with the usual formula :

"Thank you, Jarvie, but I am only going to the sea-side."

"Ye hae the back-send again, Jarvie," said the corporal complacently.

"Miss Rodney is vera uppish in her ways, Mr. Scott ; but I'm no carin'. Ye hae to tak' women-folk at a venture, as it were ; listen to their flights and fancies, and mak' a deegnified bow. I ken weel the Colonel wad preefer I was takin' care o' the young leddy ; but what then ? In the lang run, it's neither here nor there."

They were standing in front of Rodney House, watching Scotia ride slowly under the firs shadowing

one of the avenues of the park ; the corporal smoothing out the *Daily News*, which had just come ; the groom holding his saddled horse by the bridle. The same thought was in the mind of both men—her sex, and the pity of it.

“Will she marry Mr. Blair, think ye, Corporal ?”

“She has mair sense, Mr. Jarvie.”

“What think ye o’ oor new minister, Corporal ?”

“He has a vera connect method o’ enforcing doctrine ; and he isna sploring awa’ anent the danger o’ the Kirk. That is ane comfort.”

“Have ye been hearing o’ the work, Corporal, how it has been growin’ and prosperin’ ; meetin’ after meetin’, night after night ?”

“I hae heard, I hae heard, Mr. Jarvie. I hae been told. I hope it is weel, but there is great need o’ care ; great need—vera great need o’ care.”

“I was dreamin’ of oor Miss Rodney and the new minister last night.”

“Keep your dreams in your ain heart, my young man. Mony a ane gets their dreams read, in a way they little thocht of. And tak’ your horse back to the stable, neither o’ you will be wanted this morning.”

Jarvie turned away rather sulkily. He felt it a trial to be dismissed so often. But on this point Scotia had prevailed with her parents, after much argument and entreaty. It was understood that Jarvie was to attend her, whenever visiting or shopping took her beyond the limits of Rodney Law ; but that upon their own land, and down to the fishing village, and along the sea-shore, she was to have the liberty and solitude which made the exercise so delightful to her.

This morning, to be alone with Nature was the

supreme earthly pleasure her heart desired ; and when out of sight, she put her pony to its utmost speed and soon reached the sea-side, and the long stretch of sand, and the great wall of rocks, full of strange caverns, that guarded the coast. The pony then stepped slowly through the spent waves, and Scotia dropped the reins loosely and began to think. It pleased her to blend the idea of Angus Bruce with these great spaces of enpurpled water, with the sapphire streak on the horizon, and the shadowy fishing boats stealing away into the luminous haze. She was a mile above the village. Its bluff-browed, bonneted men were on the water, or else fast asleep ; its women were in the village selling fish. There was no human noise audible ; only the crying and cawing of the sea gulls, fluttering in long files above the tumbling green waves.

The peace of the place was perfect. It was a noble chamber in which to question her heart. The fear of man—the terror of evil tongues, and scornful women seemed infinitesimal in such companionship. The everlasting hills, the mighty sea, the eternal spaces around, helped her to a decision based only upon the noblest part of her own nature, and the immutable dignity of Truth. Come weal or woe, she felt that if she were faithful to love, and honor, and truth, all would be well in the end.

As she mused, the weather suddenly changed. The waters became black, the gulls, troubled in their minds, began to wail piercingly ; the wind, with an iron voice, called up the sea, and jostled and pushed the clouds, and brought rain on its broad wings. Scotia rode rapidly to the village ; she felt as if the waves were now chasing her beyond their own “ thus far.”

In the midst of a pelting shower, she entered the first cottage she came to.

She stepped into the chamber of death. A young man, the youngest son of his mother, lay at that one narrow door which opens to eternity. The dismal, solemn stillness was only broken by his labored breathing. He was already within the portal ; Death stood between him and earth. The mother sat in a low chair tearless, smitten by the suddenness and horror of her grief, into total indifference to all human considerations. She saw Scotia enter ; but what was any mortal being to her ? Was not her child on the verge of everlasting torment ?

Some men and women neighbors sat by the wretched mother. They were awe-struck, and had no comfort to offer her. The minister stood by the foot of the death-bed. He also was sombre and silent. His eyes were full of anguish, but his lips were stern, and his attitude hopeless. No one noticed that Scotia was wet. What was a little rain water in the presence of the Avenger of Sin ?

Scotia touched the minister a little imperatively. "What is the matter with Jock Thomson ?"

"He has been stabbed in a drunken fight ; he is dying."

"Pray for him !"

"Alas ! He is bound over to the wrath of God, and by his sin, made subject to eternal death. He has come to the end of God's mercy and patience."

"It is not true ! There is no end to the patience of God ! no end to His mercy !" She slipped down by the side of the dying man, she took his cold hands in hers :

“Jock! Jock Thomson! Do you hear me? I am Scotia Rodney.”

Some transient gleam of assent passed over Jock’s face, and she continued :

“Jock, I am telling you the eternal truth—God is love! always love! Love to the last moment. David says, even if you make your bed in hell, God is there to hear you. Jock, you have made your bed in hell, but do not fear, and above all do not doubt. God will hear you. Cry to Him! It is not too late! It is not, indeed!”

Jock opened his eyes and tried to speak.

“I will cry for you, only say the words after me in your soul. God be merciful! God be merciful to me, a sinner! a great sinner! a great sinner, but not too great for Thee to pardon!”

And the dying man caught the spirit of the words, and he prayed with her.

“You believe, Jock? It is true as death that God’s love is greater than death; that God is able and willing to save to the very uttermost. Think of that, Jock, to the uttermost all who come to him.”

The departing soul was stayed by this majesty of faith and love. It made a last supreme effort of surrender.

“Jock, listen to me! You are nearly dead, but remember Calvary and the cross on the lonely hill-top, and Jesus Christ all alone, through the dark, suffering for your sins. Cling to the cross! Cling to the pierced feet on it! Say once more—Even me, O Christ!”

He was listening with all his spiritual senses. He was trying to speak through his last convulsive sobs. He went out of life with the promise of love and for-

givenness in his ears. Scotia was weeping as she talked to him. His mother had risen from her chair, and stood with lifted hands, not daring to pray. The minister had covered his face. The watchers with the mother had fallen upon their knees. While Scotia was saying with the dying lad, "Even me, O Christ!" he went to the mercy of The Crucified. She closed his eyes with a prayer, and then turned with her wet face to his mother. She led her to a chair, and whispered, God knows what words of hope and comfort. But the woman looked in the minister's face, and doubted them. Surely he must know best. And what should a young girl like Scotia Rodney understand of the high things of God's election and God's mercy? She shook her head, and covered her face with her apron, and gave herself up to unrestrained weeping.

The storm was still severe, but Scotia felt as if it would be a joy to face it. Angus suggested a visit to the widow Johnson's cottage. "She will dry your habit," he said, "and make you a cup of tea."

"Can you think of such things in the very article of death?" She asked the question almost angrily. "Help me to mount, if you please. I must go home. I must be alone. It is the first time I ever met Death."

He did as she asked him. He scarce lifted his eyes to her face. But just as she was leaving, with the rain driving on every side of them, in the gloom of the storm, he said :

"Miss Rodney, you have troubled me much by what you said. Was it right, to give a wicked man such hope?"

"It was right. Christ died not only for our sins,

but for the sins of the whole world—the whole world, Mr. Bruce ! That is God's zone of mercy. Dare you limit it ? ”

He was standing by her side when she began the sentence, his pale face sternly thoughtful, lifted through the smur and drive of the rain, his head uncovered, his black hair wet and clinging, his eyes shining and misty. Ere she had finished, the horse, impatient in the storm, had started ; and the solemn, imperative question was carried back to him on the wind's wet wings, and flung like a buffet in his face.

All his way home it buffeted his soul, so that he was not conscious of his physical struggle with the storm. And he was also angry. What right had a girl like Scotia Rodney to trouble his firm convictions with questions that would haunt him like ghosts ? And what right had she to usurp his office at the bed of death, and cry “ peace ” where there was no peace ? He had been interfered with ; he had been set aside, put below, and out of his place, before his parishioners. Some of them might say he had submitted to it, because Scotia was the daughter of his patron. It made him burn with indignation. He knew that neither for the love of woman, nor the favor of man, would he abate one tittle of the faith due to his creed, or the respect due to his office, and yet he had been placed in a position that gave men and women occasion to say so. The rain and wind that beat upon and drenched and tore his garments, and wearied his body, was but a symbol of the spiritual storm which distracted and mortified his soul.

But Scotia was exalted and lifted above all mortal considerations. A solemn joy pervaded her. She had stood by the side of Death and not feared

him ; and she felt at that hour how well the hardest life may be endurable with death to crown it. Near home she met Jarvie and another groom coming to seek her ; and she anticipated some of the worry and care with which the truest affection often interferes with our rare moments of spiritual joy. She had to submit to precautions she felt to be quite unnecessary. For who takes cold, or receives injury, while the spirit has the upper hand. Men and women driven by great enthusiasms go through fire and water, and compass impossibilities. All our limitations are of the body ; but in our diviner moments, when the soul takes command, it makes but small account of them.

Yet she was glad of the quiet, and dusk, and warmth of her room ; glad to be still and recall herself ; to try and understand clearly the circumstances through which she seemed to have been carried by a power beyond her control. And of course the reaction came, and her face burned when she remembered Angus Bruce. What would he think of her ? Would he ever forgive her interference ? Yet the words sprung from her soul to her lips, and how could she restrain them ? No ; she had done right. She was at peace with her conscience, though she was sure the minister was angry with her.

And the mother of the dead man ! She had not believed in her. Scotia grew angry when she recalled the woman's face. Evidently she had not wished to believe in her son's salvation, if that security imperiled one iota of her creed. If she had told the dying man that there was no God, and no heaven, and no hell, the fishermen and the women present could hardly have set their strong, stern faces into a more denying aspect. None of them wanted poor Jock

Thomson to have mercy. Jock had been all his life a child of wrath, ordained to that end by the eternal purpose and justice of the Creator. Should they give him hope, through a false creed, even the creed of the Arminians? No! They had the spirit of their theology, and were very jealous for the honor and the justice of the God of Scotland.

Happy and then unhappy, hoping and then doubting, Scotia's mind wandered in confusion and perplexity until she fell into a deep sleep. In that wondrous condition she found a place full of green glooms and dusk-white poppies; and she lay down there, and forgot all her life until some one called her name, and she felt constrained to rise and answer.

It was Bertha. She was standing by the bedside, and a servant had brought in a tray full of the highly spiced meats and the fragrant fruits that Scotia loved. All her animal senses were at once aroused by the intangible aromas of succulent meat, and the warm, fragrant smell of raspberries, and the reviving odor of the fresh drawn tea, and the scent of a large white lily.

And Bertha, charmingly dressed, and charmingly cheerful and happy, was there with them, and bent upon serving her. "Father and Mother say you are to stay in bed, Scotia; and so I am come to talk to you and to watch you enjoy your dinner. Here, Jessie, put the table close to the bedside! Such delicious jugged hare, Scotia! And here is the breast of a pheasant, and some raspberries, and just one perfect apricot—the only one ripe. Father sent it to you, and Mother made the tea herself."

"How good you are to me! Let me have the hare

first. Oh, how hungry I am ! I like hare, Bertha. It tastes of the woods, as no other flesh does,—not even venison,—and how finely spiced this ‘jugg’ is !”

“And I am going to sit with you. I am going to wait on you myself,—that will do, Jessie, you can go away, until I ring,—for positively, Scotia, the house is dreadfully dull without you.”

“Where is Blair ?”

“He went to Edinburgh as soon as he had finished his breakfast ; and the minister has not been here at all ; and no one else, for that matter, except Sir Thomas Carr. We were all so sorry for you last night—you missed the loveliest polka. Blair was perfectly charming—and then, when we came to breakfast this morning, you were off, no one knew where.”

“I went to Buller’s Cave.”

“Such a lonely place ! I do not believe Blair likes you to go about so much by yourself.”

“My doings do not concern Blair Rodney.”

“He thinks they do—or, at least, that they ought to. I am sure he went away in a ‘huff’ at you.”

Scotia laughed good-naturedly. With that deliciously-spiced food in her mouth, she could not feel very angry at Blair’s presumption, and she carelessly answered :

“Poor Blair ! He thinks a certain thing, and then he is quite sure the whole of his world must think with him.”

There was a short silence. Scotia had finished the last morsel of hare, and with a sigh of satisfaction was rearranging her tray—the breast of pheasant, and the cup of tea, then the raspberries, and the apricot. She glanced from these anticipated delicacies to Bertha. Her pretty face had become thoughtful, almost sad.

Scotia began to tell her about poor Jock Thomson's death.

The story did not interest Bertha. She cut it short. "It is just like that class of people," she said contemptuously. "If they dispute about a couple of herrings, they explain themselves with their fish knives. And Madge Thomson, Jock's mother, is a dreadful old woman. She drove her other four sons to the four quarters of the world. How can you care for such people? That is another thing Blair dislikes in you."

"I do not intend to order my life to Blair's likes or dislikes. Why should we talk of him? Sir Thomas is a nicer subject. Are you going to become Lady Carr, Bertha?"

"That depends upon you, Scotia."

Scotia's face sobered a little. "But what have I to do with it, Bertha?" She was cutting up her pheasant slowly, and she paused and looked straight into her sister's face.

"Everything, Scotia! everything! My fate is in your hands. If you marry Blair—I shall marry Sir Thomas."

"If I marry Blair?"

"Yes, dear. If you marry Blair, then, of course, I cannot marry Blair, and must take the next best."

"Oh!"

"But if you do not accept Blair, then—then, I hope Blair will marry me. You know he will not inherit if he does not marry either you or me. Oh, Scotia! if you only knew your own mind how happy you might make your poor little sister." And at that moment, with her baby face and her tearful eyes, and small

stature, she did indeed look a "poor little sister," and Scotia's heart smote her.

"What do you want me to do, Bertha?"

"To give up Blair—unless you are going to marry him. Are you going to marry him, Scotia?"

Now Scotia was hardly prepared to give an irrevocable decision at a moment's notice. It seemed unfair to herself, to her father, even to the interested claimant for her hand. She had persistently put off this decision. She did not like being taken to catechism in a manner so prompt and final. She remained silent so long that Bertha again took up the subject. And by this time she had thrown off any repugnance to its discussion that would hinder her own claim or interest. She was prepared to use every art to win what she desired.

"I do not mind confessing to you, Scotia, that I am dreadfully in love with Blair. I shall be miserable if I do not marry him; but then, you will be happy, and that will be some consolation."

"I thought you were in love with Sir Thomas Carr. I am sure he loves you truly."

"But only think, Scotia! He told me to-day that he had accepted a secretaryship in India. Mother says when she went to India she was as plump and as pretty as I am; and that in five years she was like a mummy. I could not bear such a prospect—unless you marry Blair. Then I shall be thankful to get out of the sight of your happiness. I am such a weak little thing, and I could not bear to be tempted. I might learn to envy my own dear sister."

"Then you really love Blair?"

"I have loved him from the first hour of our meeting."

"And I do not love him—and I never can love him ; but for father's sake I have hesitated."

"Oh, dear sister, think of me first ! It is only a little land father cares about. It is my love, my life, or at least what is to make my life happy."

"You know that if I give up Blair, I give up also my inheritance?"

"Dear Scotia, I know. I ask you to do a great thing. But you say you do not love Blair. If you did love him I should be ashamed to ask you. I should just marry Sir Thomas and go away to India. Mother has been crying over the prospect all day. Because, with the least encouragement from you, Blair will ask you to be his wife ; and father will urge you, and you never could deny father, I know. I have been terrified every day lest Blair should speak before I did. When he went to Edinburgh this morning, I said to mother, what a piece of good fortune it was, and then I resolved to open my heart to you to-day. You must know how anxious Blair is to have things settled with you?"

"Yes, I have known that some time. I will promise you, Bertha, he shall have things settled with me as soon as he returns."

"You will accept him?" And Bertha lifted her kerchief to her face, and began to weep with a childish helplessness that went to Scotia's heart.

"I will refuse him, then—there—and forever. I will send him to you for love and sympathy. Blair has a miraculous sense of his own interests. He is quite as capable as you are of taking the next best. Besides, he may really like you better. I think father has made quite a point of his marrying me. When

he finds out I do not want him, I dare say he will find out that he never wanted me."

"Scotia! Scotia! I can never thank you enough. To think you will really give up Blair to me! It seems impossible! Say so once more, that I may believe it."

"I will certainly refuse Blair Rodney when he asks me to marry him."

"You must think me selfish, dear Scotia, I am sure you must. But I am such a timid little thing, and the thought of having to give up Blair, and having to go to India, made me miserable."

"Be happy, then. You can marry Blair, if Blair is willing; and stay at Rodney Law."

After this absolute surrender, the feeling in the room changed. There was a restraint in it, which Bertha wished to escape from—the painful restraint of simulated gratitude. As for Scotia, no sooner was her sacrifice completed than she was assailed with doubts from every side. Her conscience did not give her any approval; her heart was wounded, and she could not listen to Bertha's iterations, because she was blindly feeling about for its hurt.

In a little while Bertha was sure that Scotia looked pale and weary, and ought to sleep. She put down the lights, and shook up the pillows, and smoothed the spread, and tip-toed about the room with an affectation of loving solicitude that was irritating. But she finally tip-toed herself out of the room, and silently closed the door behind her. For a few steps she preserved the same manner, then her face glowed with a sudden delight; she ran swiftly along the corridor, and locked herself in her own room.

“I have managed it!” she cried softly. “I have managed it! I have got all I wanted! Clever little Bertha!” And she gently patted her pink cheeks, as she looked at herself in the mirror with a great approbation.

VI.

EITHER WILL DO.

"Some kinds of baseness are nobly undergone."

"Some sins do bear their privilege on earth."

"The week impress of Love is as a figure
Trenched in ice ; which, with an hour's heat
Dissolves to water, and doth lose its form."

"There is no virtue like necessity."

—*Shakespeare.*

THERE is an instinctive sagacity which anticipates events by a warm impression of them, and this instinctive sagacity Scotia possessed in a large degree. For several days after her surrender, life went on as if she had made no such surrender. But on the Saturday evening following, she had a presentiment that the time had come for her to finish the act of renunciation she had undertaken.

It had been a sultry day, and the gloaming was oppressive. The house had already its Sabbath atmosphere. The Colonel sat silent and thoughtful by the open window. Wherever his soul wandered, it was far from Rodney Law. Mrs. Rodney was watching the maids fill the vases with fresh flowers, and lay out clean linen, and make the other preparations necessary for a peaceful Sabbath. Bertha was in her room considering the toilet she would wear to church. The

house was in perfect order ; sweet, clean, and a little mournful.

Scotia, with her bonnet in her hand, went slowly through the garden, and when she reached its confines passed into the park. The living gallery of great trees invited her. She went thoughtfully into it. "In such green halls the first kings reigned," she said softly ; "they slept in their shade, and entertained angels." Then a shadow, almost painful in its annoyance, darkened her face. She saw, afar off, not any angel, but the very material figure of Blair Rodney.

He was aware of her presence at the same moment, and struck his horse smartly to hurry its loitering steps. Scotia waited at the mossy root of a birch tree, and when Blair joined her he alighted and threw his bridle over his arm. It was evidently his intention to walk home with her. The words he was going to say she saw in his eyes and on his lips ; and her first impulse was to prevent them by any other words that she could remember. She was very nervous, and Blair's pronounced individuality was for a few minutes an oppression.

There were some blue bells at the foot of the tree, hidden among the grass, and Scotia stooped to gather them. She was hardly conscious she was doing so ; the act was an involuntary one, the outcome of her suddenly disturbed condition. But when she rose with her hands full of the pale blue flowers, Blair thought she was exquisitely lovely, and for once he became poetical. "These beautiful blossoms," he said "are like woman. As they dwell under the protecting care of the tree, so woman should shelter her weakness in the protecting love of man. I love flowers, and I love——"

"I love trees," interrupted Scotia. "They are far more noble than flowers. Flowers carry all their splendor on the outside. Trees have an intrinsic grandeur. They do not lean upon us, they are not dependent upon us in any way."

"Some trees are very delicate and require much care."

"Exotics ! I am not thinking of such. Have you noticed the north side of Rodney Hill, with its mantle of pines ? If ever I feel weak, I walk among them. What a long warfare they have waged with the forces of nature ! not singly, but in serried phalanxes, requiring little nourishment, making little display, living by union. There is nothing in nature that has such power over a noble imagination as a plantation of pines."

"Perhaps I have no noble imagination. I confess that the pine woods, as well as those dismal yews in the kirk-yard, inspire me with dislike and fear. They are very ugly, too."

"No ; they are not ugly, Blair. No tree is ugly, except the pollard willow. I like yews ; they have a solemn atmosphere, and if you go among them, you grow insensibly solemn. How huge they are ! How battered ! How venerable ! And it is incontestable that they become more and more striking as they grow to extreme old age. They are the only trees which do so. But you are not listening to me."

"No, Cousin Scotia, I was looking at you ; admiring you ; loving you ; wondering if you could ever love me !"

"I love you, cousin, just as well as there is need to."

"Enough to be my wife, Scotia ? Dearest Scotia !"

"Wives and cousins are different things, Blair."

"Make them the same in our case. Scotia, I want you to love me ; to marry me——"

"But I do not love you, Blair ; and I never could love you as a wife should love her husband. So, then, I could never marry you."

"Scotia, do you realize what you are saying ?"

He spoke with astonishment, with a shade of anger, as one might answer an unreasonable child.

"Yes, Blair. I have thought over the words you have now said very often. I knew, of course, that you would say them ; and I am not talking as a foolish woman might talk—just to be coaxed out of a false position. I mean what I have said."

"Do you think that I have asked you to be my wife because Colonel Rodney wishes me to do so ? I love you dearly, Scotia."

"You think you love me, Blair ; but I know you better than you know yourself. You really love Bertha, and she loves you with all her heart. I appreciate the kindness and justice which led you to offer your hand first to me, because I am the older, and, therefore, the natural heiress of Rodney. But let me assure you, I shall be better pleased to see Bertha and you its mistress and master. Bertha loves you. I do not love you. Bertha would marry you if you had not a shilling. I would not marry you—for all Scotland ! I would not do you such an injustice !"

"Bertha is a dear little darling, but——"

"Then tell her so, and both of you be happy ever afterward."

He was contemplating the act, even while Scotia spoke. In some respects he would have greatly preferred Scotia, but in reality neither of the sisters filled the highest ideal of Blair Rodney. A woman

like the Hon. Mrs. Bothwell, who was the glass of fashion and the leader of her own particular set, was the woman after his heart. Between Scotia and Bertha he had come to regard the choice as about even. Scotia was the lovelier woman, but Bertha would make the more obedient and comfortable wife. Scotia was the Colonel's desire, and for that very reason he felt that it would be a pleasant assertion of his independence to choose Bertha. In fact, he had begun to regard Rodney as his own by right of succession, and to feel it hard that his right was weighted by a wife of any kind.

He thought he had successfully hid all such feelings, but Scotia divined them in their naked ugliness, even as he walked in silent disappointment at her side. For some minutes neither spoke. Blair was mentally regarding the last card he could play for the inheritance of Rodney. Scotia's indifference had startled him. He was questioning with some anxiety whether he could trust Bertha or not.

"I love you for yourself alone, Cousin Scotia," he said gloomily, "and I am distracted and miserable at your refusal."

Scotia listened with eyes disdainfully cast upon the ground; and though he went on saying fond words, and swearing to them, she heeded them no more than the rocks at the seaside heed the protesting waves. Her attitude finally angered him, and he said with some temper:

"Perhaps some day, Scotia, you will regret that you quarreled with your fate."

"As for that, Blair, fate was not mine, nor am I fate's."

"Your father will be bitterly disappointed. Your

friends—pardon me—will say you have been a fool ; I speak, not as regards myself, but as regards Rodney.”

“ My father’s disappointment will pass away ; and if I am a fool, let me congratulate myself that I am one through choice, and not for want of sense. Blair, it would indeed be foolish for us to quarrel. We are not going to marry ; and I think it only fair you should keep your bad temper for your wife. That is the usual way.”

They had come into the garden by this time, and the scent of the honeysuckle was above every other scent. It had a silencing effect. Both inhaled it with passive delight. And as they drew near to the standard on which it climbed, a figure came from behind it—a figure in a pretty pink muslin gown, with some of the fragrant blossoms in her bosom. It was Bertha ; and she uttered a little cry of pleasure and came toward them.

“ Be kind, Blair,” Scotia said hurriedly, “ and do not say you thought it right to ask me first. It would be very humiliating to me.”

And never, in all his life afterward, did it strike Blair that Scotia had really made a very noble request. For it was impossible for him to conceive of a soul so great, that it could not only surrender its highest earthly interests, but also invest the surrender with an air of selfishness, in order to relieve others of the restraint of gratitude. He looked with an assumed reproach into Scotia’s face, and then called to Bertha in his loud, cheery, dominant voice. And Bertha looked so pretty, and was so happy and affectionate, that Blair felt a sudden access of liking for her. She restored him to himself ; to his own high opinion of Blair Rodney.

A gardener took away Blair's horse, and very quickly Scotia left Blair and Bertha together. She hardly knew what excuse she made ; certainly neither Blair nor Bertha paid the slightest attention to her apology. For a moment they watched her tall figure passing through the gray light ; then she disappeared among the rose bushes, and the sense of their solitude was a relief. Blair was holding Bertha's hands. Her pretty round face was dropped. Her small figure had a natural lean toward him. It was the easiest thing in life to draw it close in his embrace ; to lift the blushing happy face, and kiss his welcome from her unreluctant lips.

The rest was still easier, and still more pleasant. Bertha confessed all that Blair wished her to say ; and Blair was impelled by the very fact of his unfortunate declaration to Scotia to make the strongest possible protestations of his devotion.

In such delightful discourse time passed very rapidly. They forgot everything but their own happiness and their own interests ; and the Evening Exercise was quite over when they entered the house together. The Colonel had been unusually sorrowful while conducting it. Scotia's heart ached to the mournful question which he asked with such a restless pathos, as he stood up before his household, with his long, thin hand laid reverently on the open Bible :

"Why art thou cast down, Oh my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me ?"

The fact that he had passed by the regular portion, and chosen this psalm, was to Scotia a positive proof that her father was apprehensive and disturbed. She wondered if his soul was prescient of its approaching disappointment. She had a miserable fear as to the

wisdom and kindness of her own act. Her renunciation assumed a selfish aspect. She wished, as she listened to the mournful tones of the man praying, that she had taken consideration and advice ; that she had not allowed Bertha's selfish complaints and her own inclinations to force so final a decision from her.

As the servants left the parlor she heard the lovers entering the hall. The Colonel and Mrs. Rodney heard them at the same moment. Mrs. Rodney, in a voice of genuine surprise said, "That is certainly Blair." She heard Bertha speaking also, and, in some mysterious way, she understood the position of the two. The knowledge made her suddenly nervous ; she felt unable to face the event she had wished and planned for, and with an inaudible excuse left the room.

Scotia was by her father's side. She had no time to escape ; she was compelled to watch the entrance of the couple, who came in so demonstratively happy. Blair, out of respect for the nearness of the Sabbath, laughing in as low a tone as was possible to him. Bertha clinging to his arm, and softly echoing all his expressions of satisfaction.

Scotia glanced at the Colonel. His face was gray and angry. He sat rigidly upright, like a man expecting a blow, and ready to receive it without wincing.

"I am glad to see you again, Colonel," cried Blair, advancing. His manner was self-congratulatory and confident. It offended the Colonel in all his fine instincts. He simply bowed in response.

"Bertha and I have just come to a very happy understanding ; and we thought——"

"Mr. Rodney—Blair—you forget that this is the preparation for the Sabbath. Your affairs, whatever they may be, must wait until Monday morning. Bertha, you missed the Exercise. Was your own way, child, so far from the way of duty, that you could not make them one?"

"Father, I——"

"Make your excuse to Him whose service you neglected. I hope you have a good one—one you will dare to offer. Scotia, give me my stick. I will go upstairs. Good-night, children! Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy. Your own thoughts, hopes, and desires have no right in it."

He spoke with a slow decision that Scotia felt was a labor. She followed him into the hall, but he dismissed her there with most unusual severity. "Go back to your brother and sister," he said, "I will talk to you after the Sabbath." He purposely called Blair her "brother"; he wished her to understand his sorrow and his suffering. But that was in a measure impossible. She could form no conception of his disappointment. She did not dream that his last earthly hope had been shattered. She could not see his utter collapse of spirit when he reached his room; the pitiful wringing of his aged hands; the few last tears forced from his dim eyes by the failure of his one desire. "Oh, the long, long sorrow of life!" he sighed.

But whether we notice it or not, even the unconscious efforts of nature are toward consolation. Our very hearts throb upward; our bosoms heave toward heaven. Without analyzing the sources of comfort, the patiently receptive find them. When Mrs. Rodney joined her husband, he had got the mastery

of himself, though he looked exceedingly ill and weary.

"I suppose, Kinross, you understand about Blair and Bertha?"

"Yes. We will not talk of it to-night."

"You look ill, my dear?"

"I have had a blow. It laid me on my face for half an hour."

"But you are better; you have risen again?"

"The Lord of wings gives power to soar when men cannot rise or stand."

"Man proposes, and God disposes, Kinross, my dear."

"The rede still rings, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Why should we escape? The Sabbath may give us strength to meet what we did not wish, and to give up what we did wish."

In fact, Blair and Bertha were the only happy people in Rodney House that night. Mrs. Rodney suffered from the same uncertainty as Scotia. She was not sure in her own mind that she had done altogether right. She could not make herself believe that a good end justified all means to reach it.

Certainly the tone of the house was not flattering to the lovers, but Bertha and Blair were ignorant of the lack of sympathy. Blair felt himself already master of Rodney, and Bertha went very quickly to her sister's room. In spite of her father's regard for the Sabbath, she did not feel that it bound her for at least another hour. And she had things to say to Scotia which she could not wait to say until Monday morning.

Scotia was compelled to hear them. If she refused, Bertha would attribute the refusal either to jealousy, disappointment, or want of sisterly love; to any

reason rather than to the right one. For Bertha had one of those commonplace natures which remorselessly lop off whatever outgrows its own level.

"Dear Scotia," she said effusively, "are you not glad for my happiness? I never was so surprised. And only think, how foolish I was to doubt dear Blair. He says he has loved me from the first moment of our acquaintance. You remember, he met me first?"

"If you are happy, I am very glad in your happiness, Bertha."

"I was such an ignorant little thing. Blair reminded me to-night of times without number when he has tried to make me understand how precious I was to him. But I was too timid to hope for such joy as Blair's love. He says Father wanted him to marry you."

"Blair ought not to say such things. I told you I did not love Blair. He never could have suited me—Never! Never!"

"Well, that is not dear Blair's fault. He loves you as a sister, Scotia."

"He is very kind. I will try and love him—as a brother."

"Of course, as you are the eldest, it would have been better for Blair to have married you. Father wanted it so; but Blair says he would rather lose Rodney than lose his little Bertha. I suppose he may have to lose Rodney. He said he could see that Father was very cross. Blair is particularly shrewd and penetrating."

"Then he must understand that he will not lose Rodney. He ought to feel sure that my Father's word stands under all circumstances. Why should he and you pretend to think differently?"

"You might say a few words in our favor, Scotia. You know, Father always listens to you."

"When I gave up Blair and Rodney to you, Bertha, I gave up both without reservation. Do me justice, and believe that."

"Do not be cross, Scotia. I think it was kind of you to give up Rodney. I really feel that, and so does Blair. We are going to ask Father to divide it."

"I pray you do nothing of the kind. Can you not see that Father accepts Blair only because through him the estate can be kept intact in the Rodney name."

"Blair says that he is the next heir, and that his choice of me is therefore entirely free."

"Blair lies! excuse me, Bertha. You know, and Blair knows, that Father can leave Rodney exactly as he wishes."

"Except for the moral obligation. No Rodney has ever thought the moral obligation less binding than a legal one."

"Did you come here to discuss money matters, and it is so near the Sabbath, Bertha?"

"And though you did, in imagination, give Blair up to me: in reality, dear Scotia, Blair has always been mine. He says so. It was only my foolish, timid heart that could not believe in its own happiness. Blair says, 'I do not know how charming, how very charming I am.' I wish I could feel as you do, about my own worth. Now, I shall have the pleasure of refusing Sir Thomas Carr, with his Indian Secretaryship!"

"Sir Thomas is a fine fellow. Any woman might be proud of his homage."

"I make you welcome to it. Now, as you made

me welcome to Blair, we are quits. When I told Blair that Sir Thomas Carr's offer was still pending, and that I was to answer him next Tuesday, you cannot think what a state Blair was in ! He wanted me to write a refusal to-night. He said he could not sleep unless I did. He went for paper, and pen, and ink, and just gave me no rest till the note was written."

"And you wrote it? To-night?"

"I did, to please Blair. Blair said it was a very lady-like letter."

"You let Blair read Sir Thomas Carr's letter? Bertha?"

"Blair would have been jealous if I had not let him read it. Poor Sir Thomas ! He will be broken-hearted."

"I do not think he is to be pitied. You are not the wife for him. He will find that out when he meets the right person."

"I am going to sleep now. Dear me ! it is striking twelve. It is the Sabbath. Good-night, dear Scotia?" and she went away with the solemn little air she usually wore on the Sabbath day. But ere she reached the door, she turned and said in a deliberate, speculative manner : "I wonder what the minister will say? Angus Bruce is very fond of me, lately."

"Angus Bruce?"

"Indeed, yes ! A woman knows when a man is in love with her ; and I know Angus Bruce has thought a great deal about me. It was presumptuous, of course, but I dare say the poor fellow could not help it."

"Why presumptuous?"

"A man with £200 a year?"

"He is a clergyman. His office makes him the social equal of any lady in Scotland."

"That is only tradition. Scotia, have you forgotten that we are breaking the Sabbath, talking of our own affairs?"

"Is talking of them worse than thinking of them?"

"If you begin to ask questions, I am going. Questions are so disagreeable. Good-night again! I hope it will be fine to-morrow. I should like to wear white on my betrothal Sabbath."

Then the door finally closed, and Scotia went to it and softly drew the bolt. At last she was alone, and she turned to her heart almost angrily, and began to talk with it. "I see this," she said, "that they who try to do a kind, unselfish action, sow the sea with sand, and must reap their crop of foam, and harvest it. What have I received? what shall I receive for my absolute relinquishment of Rodney? For my delicate refusal of Blair's love? Blair has already forgotten, if he ever understood it. Bertha is bent on letting me feel that my sisterly kindness was unnecessary. She is humiliated by its remembrance. She will never think of it as a proof of my affection, and be glad in it, as such. I have grieved Father almost to death. And what is my recompense?"

Then a voice, low, but penetrating every corner of her consciousness, asked, "What were your motives?"

She took up the question with the impatience of an angry woman. "I suppose my motives were not purely angelic. But if I pulled a rose up by the roots, I should find its roots in the dirt. It is not necessary to pursue a motive to its roots, any more than it is necessary to look for the root of a rose. And it is the same with every flower, even those sweet and fair as heaven; no, it is not. There are the orchids and the mistletoe. But they are thieves and parasites.

Suppose I go to the roots of my motives ! Suppose then, I did not want to marry Blair, and that it was not very much of a trial to give up Rodney, if I had to take Blair with Rodney. And suppose that I did want to be free to marry Angus Bruce—if he should ask me to marry him. There is nothing wrong in my secret motives ; and as for my apparent ones, they were surely beyond reproach ; and Bertha ought not to be above acknowledging them. I do wonder if any woman—or man either—ever goes to the bottom of their actions ! May not an habitually true life have its Apocrypha ? ”

Then she remembered Bertha’s assertion that the minister loved her. It did not trouble Scotia in that light. She did not believe Bertha. She knew that Bertha did not believe herself. But the assertion showed her that Bertha had seen or suspected the love between Angus and herself ; and that she was bent on making trouble about the matter. And the possibilities in this direction were manifold. “ But I will not anticipate evil,” she said ; “ when a great exigency comes, it brings with it the ability to conquer.”

She rose with the thought and drew out the large amber pins that confined her hair, and suffered her robe to fall from her. The late moonlight flooded the room ; her white throat and arms showed in it with a supernatural beauty ; and anon it fell all over her white-robed figure, kneeling with clasped hands and bowed head, uttering softly words of holy hope and everlasting trust ; words that went singing through her soul, irradiated her face, and led her to the open window in a happy tremor of exaltation.

The love which gives all, can forgive all ; and

Scotia was no longer angry with Bertha. "Some angel has been near me," she whispered. "Are we not encompassed by them? Loving, helpful soul-relatives, who are as kind, and kinder, than those of flesh and blood!"

She stood with the open casement in her hand. The clock struck two. There was a nightingale singing afar off, and she could see the ocean lying still beneath the moon, and gently murmuring

Lovely, lovely, lovely, Lady of the Heavens!

Her heart swelled to its tide, and she went to sleep bespeaking by her very passivity those happy dreams that double life, and are the heart's bright shadow on life's flood.

The morning was according to Bertha's desire, fair and sunny, and she appeared in a dress of snowy lawn. Her girdle was white and she carried white lilies in her hand. Blair objected to the lilies. He thought them too secular for a church service, and Bertha sweetly laid them down to wither in the hot August sun.

They were a little late; Bertha intended the party to be so, and Bertha and the clocks always came to an understanding. The minister was in the pulpit when they entered. Every one else was in their pews. The Colonel's face flushed with annoyance. Bertha, leaning on Blair's arm, was as cool and calm as if she was in her own room. Yet in some mysterious way she informed every one of her betrothment. Every one but Angus. He knew when the Rodneys entered, but he did not permit himself to consider either man or woman when he stood up in the House of God.

Yet unconsciously the thought of Scotia may have

been in his heart when he chose his sermon—the thought of her usurpation of holy office ; the angry thought that tortured him through all his loving thoughts. At first his face was dreamy and mystical, and he felt his way among the great facts of time and eternity, only as a cold, logical word-sifter ; but very soon his eyes caught the light of heaven, and his lips its fire, and the granite faces of the shepherds and the fishers became tremulous with emotion ; and men who never moved a hair's breadth, grew restless, and longed to rise from their seats.

“ I said to my heart but yesterday, I will go no more into the pulpit. I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name ! ”—and the face of the preacher was bent and sad, and Scotia knew that in some way she had influenced this decision ; “ but ”—and he lifted his head, and looked beyond church and congregation—“ but, this morning, I felt even as the prophet did. His Word was in my heart a burning fire, shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay,” and then like a tide of lava his words made a road for themselves to all hearts.

Scotia was humbled to the dust. This was the commissioned minister of the Lord ; and she had dared to usurp his place, and deny his words, and dishonor him in his office ! She went home very quiet, but not unhappy. In spite of all her faults, she believed that Angus loved her. And for the love of such a man, what earthly honor, what gold and land, would she not surrender ! And all the after-day was set to the bugle call of that sermon, and to the music of the promises which rang through it.

“ It has been a good Sabbath,” said the Colonel, as

the family gathered around him in the evening, "and Sabbath is the father of the week. For it is the first day, and a great deal depends upon the beginnings of things."

"All is well that ends well, sir."

"That is only partly true, Blair. If an event, or a work does not begin well, and go on well, it is not all well, whatever the ending may be."

"Was it not 'all well' when the penitent thief ended well, sir?"

"It is true that he ended well, Blair; but did that pay back what he had stolen, or make reparation for all the misery he had caused? How much better it had been if he had begun well, also. To suppose differently is an Arminian fallacy. Now we will thank God for a happy Sabbath. Whatever the week brings it has given us the strength to meet it."

And then Blair and Bertha glanced at each other. They had already the egotism of lovers. They could imagine no joy or no sorrow in Rodney House, which would not have its root in their love and their interests.

VII.

ESAU'S SISTER,

"You Scotsmen are a pertinacious brood,

Fitly you wear the thistle in your cap
As in your grim theology . . . God knows you'll find
Well-combed and smooth-licked gentlemen enough
To sneer at massive Calvin's close-wedged creed.

The burden of our life is hard to bear,
But we must bear it, if it blame or bless ;
Joy is so like to grief, hope to despair,
That life's best sweet, has taint of bitterness."

VERY early on Monday morning the Colonel was ready to receive Blair Rodney. The young man was flattered by this promptitude. "You see how anxious your father is to have our affairs settled," he said to Bertha, and neither of them suspected that restlessness of a brave soul which is "straightened," until it has lifted, and drank to the dregs, any bitter cup appointed it.

And whatever may have been the Colonel's disappointment, he was by this time able to control all evidences of it. He met Blair with his usual courtesy, and discussed the proposed marriage with a calm and honorable recognition of all Blair's rights.

"I have only one charge to make," he said ; "it is that you hold Rodney in trust for the next male heir, whether it be your own son or not. If one of my

boys had lived, he would have stood to-day as you stand, future lord of Rodney, but as I have no son, I pass over my daughters in your favor, and I expect you to do likewise, if Destiny demands this sacrifice from you. The house and lands of Rodney must go in the name of Rodney."

"I promise you, sir."

Then Bertha was called, and the Colonel kissed her tenderly and gave her to Blair. "I have determined," he said, "to redecorate and refurnish Innergrey, the dower house. It is large enough for such an establishment as you require, and when you leave it, the place that knows me now will know me no more, and you will take my place."

"May God long preserve you, sir."

Blair spoke with apparent sincerity, and Bertha hid her face in her father's breast. The short silence was broken by Colonel Rodney.

"And as the Innergrey House will then be my wife's home, I think you should decide together as to the colors and style of the painting and furniture."

"As to the date of our marriage, sir? Have you anything to propose?"

"Innergrey will not be ready until the spring. Suppose, Blair, we leave the exact day for a future settlement? And in the mean time, Bertha will prepare her wedding garments." Then both father and lover looked tenderly at the young girl, who, with assured love, had put on a marked increase of beauty. Her fresh muslin gown, her neatness, and sweetness, and pretty air of modesty and dependence, were really very charming. Blair was quite inclined to believe that he had been an extremely fortunate young man.

The interview was not prolonged. No one felt it to

be other than a piece of business, well and pleasantly over. In this respect, fathers are often very hardly treated. Mothers are taken into confidence, and consulted about all the charming details of the marriage. They assist in the arrangement of the new home. They buy the *trousseau*, and pass many happy days in spending the check which it is the father's sole privilege to write. Mrs. Rodney was now quite excited over Bertha's engagement. To look after the refurnishing of Innergrey was an employment thoroughly suiting her. And in Bertha's wardrobe she anticipated months of pleasurable discussion and shopping. Interviews with *modistes*, consultations about the ceremony, about people to be asked, and people to be passed over ; these and many other affairs in connection with the great event pressed with a sudden but delightful hurry upon her.

Innergrey was a large granite house on the southern confines of Rodney. It had been the dower house for seven generations ; and Bertha was delighted with the idea of making it a bride house. In an hour Mrs. Rodney, Blair, and Bertha were on their way there. They took with them a comfortable lunch ; for Blair was bent on making all the measurements and calculations that would be necessary.

"We will go through the place, room by room, and make a note of what is to be done ; and of what is to be got, for each room." And then he unfolded the paper he had brought, and looked at the pencils, and it was evident that both he and the two ladies felt they had entered upon a very important and a very interesting piece of work.

The Colonel, standing at his window, watched them drive away. He noticed particularly Blair's bluff

comeliness and bounceable manners—his hearty commendation of the capacious lunch basket—his joyous voice, his noisy excitement. And he acknowledged the physical beauty of the young bridegroom, saying to himself at the same moment, that it was, after all, only the husk of being. Yet, in a more delicate way, Bertha was but his counterpart. She was radiating smiles, and all alive with her new hopes and joys ; but these hopes and joys touched nothing but bodily senses and material ambitions. Even Mrs. Rodney's happiness was set to the same key—a delightfully natural one, easily reached by the most commonplace of aims and considerations.

"Perhaps they will look up to my window!" and as the thought crossed his mind, the loving father straightened himself, and smiled in anticipation of the smiles he would be asked for. But in their excited condition all forgot the old man. Mrs. Rodney was giving directions about the lunch basket. Blair, bending forward, was whispering to Bertha ; whispering words which received only a blush, and a smile, and one little push, for answer.

The Colonel understood his exclusion from the merry party. It was natural, but it made him sigh. After all, it is a sharp and melancholy wine which life distills, and the lonely father drank of it that day. His thoughts quickly turned to Scotia. "Why had she been left at home?" His face flushed with anger at the supposition of any slight offered Scotia. Then he remembered how crossly he had spoken to her on the previous evening, and he rang the bell impetuously, and asked for Miss Rodney.

"Very early this morning she went out to walk, sir."

"Which way did she go?"

"By Rodney Hill, toward the pine wood."

He had a mind to go and meet her, but he soon reflected that the sun was already high, and that he was unable to bear the heat. Yet he received unconsciously a sense of rest, as his imagination found her out. He saw the pines standing in that deep intensity of green which absorbs the sunlight. He felt the profound peace, the equable light, the fresh aromatic air, the sense of unchangeableness that is the atmosphere of these trees. He knew the group under which she would be lying at rest. He could see the brown, clean earth covered with the dry, needle-like leaves—the blackberry brier straying into the open spaces; the darkness that was not darkness, but a beautiful gloom surrounded by light.

He thought of her as certainly quite alone, for there was no road through the wood: only a little bridle path which was sometimes used by Tam, the herd, when he was in a hurry to reach the village. This morning Tam had gone very early for the minister, and in order to save time had taken him through the wood. There was a farm-house beyond it, which could be reached half an hour earlier by this path; and as Margaret Stirling lay there dying, Tam had taken the minister by the short path.

He returned the same way. It was a peaceful way out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and he trod it very slowly and thoughtfully, and yet with a sense of solemn triumph. Before Scotia was aware of his presence in the wood, he saw her under the trees. She had cast her book away, and with her arms under her head was gazing upward into the thick branches. As he drew nearer she heard the rustle of foot-

steps, and stood up. "It is only Tam;" she thought.

When she saw that it was Angus Bruce, her first feeling was one of intrusion. She met him a little coldly. It was not pleasant to find that this hitherto inviolable sanctuary had been broken into. Bruce understood the feeling, and he hastened to apologize for his presence there :

"Tam came for me in a hurry. You know that Margaret Stirling has been long sick. She is dead. This path shortened my walk considerably. I hope I have not used it to your annoyance."

"No. I was just thinking of going home. We will walk together, if you like. So Margaret is at rest? I am sure her end was peace."

"It was the grandest outgoing. I have been at the gate of heaven. Do you know anything of her history?"

"I do not. Father once said she had had great sorrows, and great consolations. I did not ask him the particulars."

"I can tell you in a few words. The Stirlings have owned their farm for two hundred years. They thought a great deal of their little house and few acres, and they have been always pious, prudent men. Margaret's eldest boy, Will, however, became a drunkard, a gambler, a—a——"

"A what we call a 'ne'er-do-wee,' I suppose?"

"Just so. And finally, to save him from prison, the father had to mortgage the farm beyond all his hopes of redemption. The mother toiled and hoped on; the father died of the disgrace and sorrow, leaving Margaret with three little girls and her worthless lad. He was brought to his senses by his father's death.

He gave up drink absolutely. He returned home and worked hard. He became a drover, and made money. This morning I met him at his mother's death-bed—a grizzled, middle-aged man, stern and grave, but with a light upon his face earth never gave. We broke bread and drank the holy cup in the very peace of heaven; and then, just as Margaret was going, Will cried out: 'Oh, Mither! Mither! Ye'll see Fethyer soon. Tell him the farm is a' our ain again. *An' it's a' right wi' me!*' With that blessed message, Margaret went away, smiling."

They had stood still while the minister was telling the humble tragedy and its triumphant finale; a natural instinct staying their feet, and making both solemn and reverent. Scotia's eyes were shining with sympathy. Bruce's pale face was full of vision and adoration. They walked through the green gloom, apart, speaking only in monosyllables; breathing that air of divine happiness which is only reached when love is touched by the sorrow of earth and the joy of heaven. On gaining the open ground conversation became easier, and Bruce said:

"How grand is our faith! What men and women! what fathers and mothers it makes! austerely brought-up generations, dwelling soberly in their sheltered homes, reading their Bibles, living by faith, subject to duty, courageous, calm, reflective. Will Stirling's father has been dead twenty years, but he is still moved by the hope of his forgiveness and approval. Great is the faith of John Calvin! and it nurtures great men and great women."

"Yet something is to be allowed for race and climate, Mr. Bruce."

"True. Scottish hearts are the native soil of Cal-

vinism, and though many revile our misty, rainy land,
I for one

Thank God, who isled us here ; and roughly set
His Scotchmen in blown seas and stormy showers ;

and as enthusiasm is contagious, Scotia lifted her head higher, and stepped more proudly to Bruce's patriotic thanksgiving. But the disputatious spirit of her race was in her, and she said :

"Our faith ought not to rest on any creed, Calvin's, or Luther's, or Arminius. The evidence afforded by the testimony of our own hearts is greater."

"Not so !" he answered positively. "Not so. A religion sought only in the heart of each man will be a religion of his own framing, and will vary with each individual character. Creeds are as necessary to religion as laws are to government."

"However, Mr. Bruce, Christ's touchstone to the religious life of each soul is neither doctrine nor faith. It is conduct. I was an hungered and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty and in prison, and ye visited me ! This is religion, as I understand. Of what use was Will Stirling's faith in Calvinism until he stopped drinking and went to work, and redeemed his evil days by good deeds ?"

"Until his faith brought forth works, it was like an instrument closed and silent ; but it was good to have the instrument there, when God willed him to open and use it. I wish, Miss Rodney, you would remember that false opinions may be really worse than false morals. The latter meet their punishment very quickly, but false opinions may do a great deal of harm, before they are stayed ; they are, then, widely the worst."

Scotia was silenced by this assertion, and by the positive tone in which it was uttered. And nothing was to be gained by opposing a man so sure in his own mind as Angus Bruce. They were at the manse gate also, and it was near the minister's dinner hour. She reminded him of the fact, and before he could answer, old Adam lifted himself from the ground, and supplemented it.

"I shall walk with you to Rodney," he said, heedless of both; and they went onward, a little consciously.

Scotia knew that Adam was leaning on his spade watching them, and speculating about their affairs; and ere she was aware, her annoyance voiced itself in the assertion, that, "Adam was a meddling old man. And I don't believe in his deafness or blindness very much, Mr. Bruce," she added. "I think he assumes both in order to exasperate his wife. If he were deaf he could not have heard our approach; and if his sight was bad, as he affirms, he could not so readily have distinguished us."

"If he assumes these failings to exasperate Grizel, she turns them to her own advantage. I asked her yesterday if Adam did not miss his Bible reading very much, and she answered, 'He disna feel that, sir. I read the Bible to him every day, an' mony's the bit I put in for his guid.' Grizel is quite capable of making a commentary on any part of the book she reads, if she thinks Adam needs it."

"But if Adam does not hear Grizel's additions 'put in for his good'?"

"Grizel holds your opinion, that Adam's deafness has some method in it. Very likely the opinion is correct, for at the kirk meeting last week, when I was

explaining some matter to the deacons, I asked, 'Are you hearing, Adam?' and he promptly answered—'Oh, ay, I'm hearing, sir—but to vera little purpose.'"

Scotia laughed heartily, and all nature seemed to laugh with her. The sun shone brightly overhead, and on either hand the creamy, wavy barley, and the scarlet, flashing poppies, salaamed their heads to the passing lovers. They talked as they went through the park of a score of charming things—of the fair, brave trees standing kinglike, of the green plumes of the fern, of the moss, and the growing darnel, and the little daisies, and the thrush and the wren lilting together. Just then, life was sweet as perfume, and pure as the dawn or the dew.

At the garden-gate they stopped suddenly. "I will go no farther," said Bruce. His face was so handsome and cheerful that Scotia smiled frankly into it. Then she found courage to say what she had been longing to say, during all their interview:

"My cousin Blair is going to marry Bertha."

"Bertha!"

"Yes. Does the news make you astonished?"

"It makes me unspeakably happy! Nay, but I must speak——" and he took both her hands, and gazed with a passionate admiration at the girl. Never—even in her lustrous white satin robe—had she looked so enchanting to him as she did at that moment. The sunshine fell all over her and her plain winsey dress and little black silk scarf and gypsy bonnet. But Scotia's beauty could bear the sunshine, and she always looked her best in the woods, or among the shrubs or flowers. "Nay, but I must speak," Bruce cried, and he took her hands, and for one breathless moment, the air around trembled with love

and hope, and they were conscious of a holy flame between them—the flame of meeting souls. It made Bruce dumb ; his emotion was so great he could find no words for its expression ; Scotia first broke the silence, though her voice was almost a whisper :

“ If—if there is any reason why speech is premature, then I will not have it. You must not blend the thought of me with any after-thought of remorse, or even regret. You would not wish to do so ? ”

“ No.”

“ Then—it must be good-morning—now.”

He bowed, and she went onward, feeling his soul follow hers with strong asseverations of love, and lowly thanks for her noble restraint. It was a sweeter revelation than any other could have been ; for when love has that rare quality of ‘ seeking not its own,’ it has the quality of heaven, and tastes the bliss that has no after-pain of regret or sorrow.

As she drew near to the house a kind of fear attacked her. She dreaded to meet Blair and Bertha, and it seemed almost a sacrilege to carry the love in her heart into an atmosphere full of veiled antagonisms and curious questionings. It was then a great relief to meet Corporal Scott in the hall with her Father’s lunch tray ; and to hear that she was likely to have some hours in which to attune herself to the proper domestic key.

“ I shall take lunch with Father, Corporal,” she said joyfully ; and with a light step she sped before him to her father’s sitting-room. He was still in his dressing gown, lying upon a couch by the open window. The interview with Blair had been very trying ; he had felt unable to rally speedily from it.

But Scotia brought in a new atmosphere ; the feel-

ing of the woods came in with her—the scent of the woodruff—the glow of the sunshine—the very aroma of happiness, of youth, and freedom.

“Oh, my dear daughter, how glad I am to see you ! Corporal, another plate and glass. I am to have company to-day. And where have you been, Scotia ? To the Stone Pillar ? ”

“No. I went to the pines. One grows strong in their company. And I met Angus Bruce there.”

“But how ? And why ? I thought no one—except it might be Tam—ever trespassed in that plantation. I do not like it.”

“There was a sufficient reason, Father.” Then as they ate their lunch, Scotia told again the solemnly joyful story of Margaret Stirling's death ; and much conversation grew out of it. At the close of the subject, the Colonel said :

“I have dealings with Will Stirling frequently, and he is an honest, worthy fellow. His father I never knew, but I have often noticed his gravestone. Look at it next Sabbath, when you go to church. It is on the right hand of the path.”

“I have seen the stone. There is nothing on it, but his name, and below the name three words—‘*a good man.*’ ”

“What more could be said ? ”

Then they were silent, for the Corporal was removing the lunch service, and Scotia saw that her father had become suddenly lost in sorrowful thought. As soon as they were alone she brought him his cigars, and drew her chair near, but he pushed the cigars away, and said :

“Not yet, Scotia. I want to feel. I want to tell you something, my dear. It is so long since I gave my grief voice. I am sick for a little comfort.”

"Dear Father, I am here ! Whatever troubles you, troubles me."

"Will Stirling's father was a happy man. He died for his son. His death gave his boy everlasting life. But for my boy ! for my poor boy, I could do nothing but weep. Oh, Archibald ! My son Archibald ! Oh my son ! My son !" And he bowed his head upon his hands, and wept with a slow agonizing passion that was terrible.

Scotia let his grief have its course, then she drew closer to him, and kissed away his heavy tears, and said :

"Archibald was my eldest brother, Father ?"

"Yes. Do you remember him ?"

"Hardly. Sometimes there is a vision of a tall boy riding swiftly by your side ; but all is vague and uncertain."

"You were only four years old when he was killed. It is sixteen years ago."

"Killed ?"

"Perished between fire and sword, the brave, brave lad ! If he had lived, Scotia, I had been spared the suffering of this morning."

"I know."

"To see Blair in his place ! It is hard ! It is cruel, hard ! But God's will be done. It is always best."

"Can you tell me about Archibald ?"

"I want to tell you. My heart is aching to speak of him ; but your mother cannot bear it, and Corporal Scott has said all possible over and over. No one else knew the lad. After his death I sent you and your mother and Bertha to Scotland."

"How old was he, Father ?"

"More than twelve years. His younger brothers

were dead ; he was the only boy I had. I thought he had survived danger, and become able to bear the climate, and as he desired most of all to be a soldier, I kept him by my side. We had been at a hill station all the hot season, and at its close I was ordered to come back to garrison. I had two hundred men in camp with me, and I took one hundred and fifty of them and your mother and sisters back first, leaving fifty men to guard the tents and wagons and stores. Archibald begged to stay with them, and I never thought of danger."

"But why did you not all go together?"

"Because the wagons would have entailed slow travel, and as the weather was still uncomfortably warm, I took your mother and sister and yourself by a forced gallop during one night the whole march. The next night with fifty men I set out for the hill camp. We reached the defile in the mountains at dawn, and were met by a strong party of the enemy, who gave us some hard fighting. But they were between me and my boy, and you may know how I fought. Suddenly, without any apparent reason, they fled. My heart was hot and sick with terror. On reaching a certain elevation, I knew I ought to see the tents. They were not there. But a thin smoke curled and floated above the spot, and I rode as if I was a spirit. The wagons were gone and the stores. The men had been massacred, and then burned with the tents and such things as they could not carry off. I took out of the fire a piece of Archibald's blue cap, the gold braid and buttons still clinging to it. It was the only thing in the burnt debris that could be identified."

"Were all the men slain?"

"All—but the Corporal. Scott had charge of the wagons, and they compelled him to go with them. On the third night he escaped, and found his way back to garrison."

"Did he tell you anything of Archibald?"

"He saw him struck down by a sword—and then the fire. I pray God the sword killed him!"

"And no more?"

"No more. I went after the thieves. I rode day and night until I fell ill with fever. I hired fakirs to go among the murdering gangs in search of any information. I paid them to travel wherever such men went. I spent years in a hopeless search, which from the first I knew was hopeless. It is sixteen years ago, Scotia, but I never go to sleep without seeing the lad as I last saw him, waving his cap to me as he rode back to his death."

"Oh, my dear father!"

"He was so lovely and so loving! So cheery and so brave! Any man in the regiment would have died to save his life. They did gather round him in the fight, but the thieves were too many. Oh, my son Archibald! Oh, my son! My son!"

And Scotia kneeled by his side and kissed away the late tears of one who should have outlived tears; and presently he rose and took from his desk a picture of the slain youth, and made her notice that he had the same red-brown hair and bright blue eyes as her own. And the rain of sorrow did him good. As he talked to Scotia he grew calm and resigned, and then with a sad significance, said:

"I have told you this piteous story, Scotia, that you may understand how terrible has been my disappointment in the matter of Blair and Bertha. If it

had been Blair and you, I could have borne better to see Blair in Archibald's place.

"But why, dear father?"

"You are the elder. You resemble Archibald very much. You have been my companion and my friend. Our sympathies are the same. In short, my dear, you are a Rodney; and your sister resembles only your mother's family—very fine people, Scotia, but—but, not Rodneys."

"Bertha and Blair are conservative, they will do very well to Rodney—they are fond of each other."

"Then, Scotia, what I have seen has deceived me. There has been some little secret spring touched, which has altered all that seemed certain; you have been moved by a few tears—a little coaxing—a trifle—I know not what, and you have sold your inheritance for some such mess of pottage. You are a sister to Esau."

"Even if this were true, dear father, was it not better to sell my inheritance than to sell myself?"

"Was it as bad as that, Scotia?"

"Yes, sir. I never could have made my will or my heart consent; they would have been life-long captives to my interest. I must have violated my honor and my truth constantly. And for Blair? Truly, in such case I should have sold Scotia Rodney for a mess of pottage!"

"For all that, you are one of Esau's sisters."

"They are few and honorable. I am proud of the distinction. What a noble brother I have! What a generous, unselfish, benignant, affectionate soul Esau was! When you put him beside 'that smooth man,'

his brother Jacob, he is so far above him that you cannot measure the distance. As for Jacob, I thank God his family virtues are not ours ! ”

“ But Esau despised his inheritance.”

“ No, he only valued his life above his father’s land and sheep. Esau was a busy, brave man, and while Jacob was sitting in the tent making plots, counting increase, or sodding pottage, Esau was out in the woods or fields with his bow and spear. His living was in his own hand—perhaps he liked better to make it than to inherit it.”

“ He desired his brother’s life. Jacob had to fly from him.”

“ But not because of a little land, or a few head of cattle. Oh, no ! He was indifferent about the inheritance, but when Jacob stole his blessing, then this mighty hunter lifted up his voice and wept. Put yourself in his times and in his place, father, and would you not also have said ‘ When my father is dead, I will kill my brother Jacob ! not because he stole my inheritance, but because he stole my blessing.’ And he was no passionate bully, he could control his anger for his father’s sake. Not while Isaac lived would he repay Jacob.”

“ Yet Jacob had to fly from his home.”

“ Men who steal and do wrong, usually have to run away. Esau stayed with his father and mother, he married a wife to please them, and was evidently happy and prosperous. As for Jacob, when I remember how disgracefully he treated that kind honorable Syrian gentleman, Laban, I have a measureless contempt for Jacob. How precisely like him it was to steal away in the night, and to carry off Laban’s children and grandchildren without giving him an oppor-

tunity to kiss them. The loss of his own son Joseph was a most righteous retribution."

"Yet God loved Jacob."

"That shows us that God can bear with a man that no respectable human being could endure to live with. And if God loved and blessed Isaac for his servant Abraham's sake—Abraham, whom he called '*my friend*'—doubtless he favored Jacob for the same reason. And with all his cunning Jacob himself testifies that his days were '*few and evil*.' He died a dependent in Egypt, living on the bounty of a pagan king. But Esau dwelt among his own people, in Seir and in Edom."

"Well, my dear, you have defended your brother Esau. Now tell me about Blair. Will he make Bertha happy? Does he love her?"

"Blair will always love the woman who admires him more than he could love any woman whom he admired. For this reason he loves Bertha. I think they will be very happy."

"They have gone to Innergrey, and it is going to rain. This is a most unreliable climate."

"It is always changing, what more would you have? I wonder if the government could stand a three months' sunshine? For the weather is the safety valve of our grumblers—and most men are grumblers."

"There are the first drops. They will get well wet. I did not expect rain with this wind."

Scotia rose and went with a gay little laugh to the window. "Yes, it is going to storm. I will go and see that dry clothing is laid out for mother and Bertha. Blair will come in stamping and fuming, and giving reason upon reason why it ought not to have rained to-day."

"Is the minister coming to dinner?"

"I know not. Is he expected?"

"There is to be a meeting to-night about Disruption. Blair told me he was going to speak his mind; and I think he asked Mr. Bruce to dine here first."

"Very likely. And Blair will expect us all to go to the meeting and hear him speak his mind, though we know it already."

"I should think so! For there is nothing uncertain anent Blair's opinions. When he mentions religion, he means the Calvinistic religion, and not only the Calvinistic religion, but the established kirk of Scotland. But he will have to be reasonable, if he has any discussion with Angus Bruce."

"Blair reasonable! Yes, he has the sweet reasonableness of Sir Anthony Absolute in 'The Rivals': 'Hark'ee Jack, I am complaisance itself—when I'm not thwarted; no one more easily led—when I have my own way.' But, indeed, yonder comes the carriage, and the driving is like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi. Good-by till dinner time!"

She put her arms around his neck, and kissed his lips, and called him "darling Father!" And he clasped her cheeks in his hands, and with a smile and sigh answered softly, "Esau's sister!"

VIII.

LOVE AND CHANGE.

"Interest makes all seem Reason that leads to it.
They only seem to hate, and seem to love,
But Interest is the point on which they move."
—*Dryden.*

"But Love the Conqueror, Love, Immortal Love,
Through the high heaven doth move ;
Spurning the brute earth with his purple wings,
And from the great sun brings
Some radiant beam to light the House of Life."
—*Lewis Morris.*

THE domestic changes accompanying and following the engagement of Blair and Bertha were not happy ones to Scotia. Her position was as painful and peculiar as it was unforeseen and unprepared for. When she had answered Bertha's entreaty for consideration, she had at least felt sure of Bertha's affectionate gratitude ; Blair's attitude she had not considered of importance. But her unselfish act brought her nothing but ill-will. Bertha, unconscious of her sister's refusal of Blair's hand, was angry at Scotia for her own act of humiliation to her. In many unkind and unnecessary ways she was constantly made to feel, what a needless grace the relinquishment of Blair had been.

She seized every opportunity—and she made opportunities—for asserting that Blair had fallen in love

with her when they first met ; and had been constant and unfaltering in his attachment, though urged by her father to consider the prior claim of the eldest daughter. And Blair, relying on Scotia's honorable nature, permitted with pleasure Bertha's pretty version of their constancy and affection. For when he remembered the real course of their love-making, and saw Scotia's face flush to Bertha's fancies, he felt himself to be revenged for Scotia's indifferences to him.

These two elements were quite sufficient to keep Scotia's heart hot within her. But they were not all that made her life a constant annoyance. The news of a wedding at Rodney House brought visitors in flocks ; and Scotia was really placed in a most humiliating position. To sit quiet, and listen to Bertha romancing to every fresh comer about Blair's love for her, was not in itself a pleasant act ; but she could feel, also, even where it was unspoken, the visitor's pity for or triumph over herself. Many of the young ladies of the neighborhood were indeed delighted at her supposed slight and disappointment. She had offended them by her beauty, and snubbed them by her indifference to the petty objects which were their own ideals. Bertha was not obtrusively handsome ; Bertha was conservative ; Bertha liked her neighbors, and promised them all kinds of entertainments when she came into the kingdom of matrimony.

Scotia, therefore, had to take with such outward good grace as she could many pitying remarks and much affected kindness, made up of spiteful and contemptible revenges for past experiences of painful inferiority.

She wondered a little that her father did not per-

ceive her trouble and comfort her in it. If he had done so, there were hours when she could have wept in his arms, and told him the whole truth about Blair and Bertha. But the Colonel was simply incapable of seeing Scotia's petty wrongs, and he would not have understood the covert thrusts given with smiles, and the mean little mental scratches of Bertha's words and shrugs. Scotia even felt that if she complained, he might possibly fail to comprehend her position, and attribute to her motives which she held in supreme contempt.

She was then in a cruel situation, one which made her look envious and beneath herself, no matter what attitude she took. For if she were gay, she was supposed to be hiding her chagrin and disappointment under the mask of levity ; and if she were grave, she was accused of envying her sister and fretting about Blair Rodney.

Mrs. Rodney understood her very much in this way, and at times her sympathies were with her eldest daughter. But in the main Bertha's affairs occupied her entirely. And Bertha's affairs were so pleasant ; and Bertha herself so charmingly deferential to her advice. Even Blair was delighted by the obedience and tractability of his betrothed. Twenty times a day he congratulated himself on the future before him : a wife so adoring, so submissive, so biddable ; an estate so ancient, so honorable, so satisfactory in the way of rentals.

But no circumstances last for ever ; day by day changes crept into them. When the autumn grew to early winter, Blair went back to Perthshire. He had business to arrange there, which would occupy him, very likely, until the spring brought his marriage day.

And, perhaps, no one was very sorry to be released a little while from his overpowering personality. No one but Bertha affected it ; she indeed deplored the necessity with flattering regrets.

“ Nothing would be done right at Innergrey without his advice and supervision—and she did rely on his taste in dress so much, how was her *trousseau* to proceed without his judgment ? ” She knew, in fact, that though Blair had presumably a great deal of taste, it was all bad ; and that if the house had been decorated and furnished, or her dresses chosen, according to it, both would have been outrages on the intelligence and feelings of their friends. But Bertha was an adept in that charming art which is so necessary to please and soothe masculine sensibilities—the art which invents for a lover all the fine qualities nature has denied him. And also, she understood the pictorial position of a sweet ignorance, and the danger of exciting his disgust by displaying accurate knowledge of any kind.

But even Bertha was a little weary. She felt how refreshing it would be to go *en deshabille*, both physically and morally ; to be careless both of her ribbons and her temper for a short time. It was a wet day at the end of October when the relief came, and as soon as she had waved her handkerchief to Blair at the last turn, she flung herself into an easy-chair by the fire, with the air of one who says with mental emphasis, “ Thank goodness, that is over ! ”

Scotia also felt the reaction. She wrapped herself in her duffle cloak, and went into the park. On the main avenues it was not unpleasantly stormy. There the ground was well graveled, and the swaying of the bare branches, and the heavy drip of the rain, and the

mournful sighing of the wind, was just the antagonism she needed. It was the antagonism of nature ; it was devoid of meanness and of all ill-temper ; and the opposition of her will to it, was a healthy opposition. It sent the blood racing through her body ; it made her heart resolute, her brain clear ; it gave her hope and strength, and she went home, after an hour's buffeting, full of physical energy and moral courage.

Bertha had gone to bed. She was "worn out," she said ; doubtless there was much truth in the assertion. To play one rôle constantly is no easy thing. Actors, indeed, assert that it is the most exhausting part of their profession. Bertha had been playing the amiable, obedient, lovely, loving *fiancée*, until she was really "worn out" with the sameness of her rôle. Everything perfect is tiresome. She was going to permit herself the luxury of absolute selfishness and bad temper. She was going to be sick, or untidy, or lazy, if she wanted to.

There was a general relaxation of the same kind throughout the house and household. It seemed pleasant to all, that the dinner should lack something of its company ceremony and elaborate preparation. The head hostler took his tobacco jar and newspaper to his room in the stables. The Colonel seldom entered them, and "Mr. Blair, thank Heaven !" he muttered, "is awa' to Perthshire. The horses, pair things ! are even down sick for a day's neglect. They hae been groomed beyond everything, and are as weary o' brush and currycomb as I am."

There was the same feeling through every room and stall in Rodney. The gardeners and the dairy hands echoed it ; even the hinds and shepherds felt that it would be a relief to let their work fall down to a

lower level. The steady rain storm fitted this household mood exactly. It kept away all visitors. It permitted every one to unbend, and so recover tone and strength.

After a short rest Scotia took some work and went to the parlor. The Colonel had just come downstairs. Mrs. Rodney and he were talking of Scotia. She knew it, even as she entered. They both looked at her with a smile. Her appearance refreshed them. The life of the outer world was still about her; the wet vitality, the coolness, the newness and strength of the salt winds, and the streaming showers. It was like a long breath of life to come in contact with her; to catch the glow from her rosy face and the light from her eyes, and the vivacity and buoyancy from her air, and smiles, and speech.

In Mrs. Rodney's hand there was a letter; and it had, somehow, a fateful look. As Scotia kissed her, she touched it, and said:

"I have been writing to your Aunt Yarrow. We shall see what will come of it. Your father thinks you ought to have a change, Scotia. He says Blair has taken a great deal out of every one; but I was just telling Father that when I spoke to you before about this visit, you declined my offer."

"It was different then, mother. Blair and Bertha were just engaged. If I had left home people would have said that I was disappointed—jealous—that I took no interest in my sister's marriage or in the preparations for it. You can imagine all the spiteful, cruel accusations that would have sprung from my absence."

The Colonel looked sharply at Scotia; for the first time he realized that she had already suffered. And

there was that intelligent sympathy in his glance, that swift comprehension of her prudence and forbearance, which she felt to be an over-recompense for all her annoyance.

"But now, as I have said, it is different. Blair is away. Bertha will go into retirement until his return. If my aunt is willing to receive me, I should like to visit her. I am a little tired of the same horizon every day."

"It is impossible to predict what my sister Jemima will say, or do, in any case," said Mrs. Rodney, answering the Colonel's interrogative look. "And I really know nothing at all of her domestic arrangements. I suppose, from the notices I have seen of her movements, in the fashionable papers, that she has wealth and position; whether she has children I know not."

"How could you let her drift so far away from your life, mother?"

"It was her wish to do so. I was in India, she in England. We had ceased to speak to each other, even while we lived in the same house. We never thought of writing. For thirty-five years we have had separate interests; but for some time I have felt the tie of blood tugging at my heart. I have in this letter acknowledged my fault, and asked to be forgiven. I have forgotten her fault, and told her so. Shall I send the letter? Are you willing to abide by its results? that is, are you willing, if she desires a visit, to pay it under any circumstances?"

"I am, mother."

"Then, Kinross, the letter shall go."

"I think it ought to go. It is only by movement that any uncertainty can be made clear. Get Dr.

Chalmer's last volume of sermons, Scotia, and read me one."

"Do you like them, Father?"

"There are single sentences in them, that thrill the nerves and fill the eyes with tears."

"They are certainly very different from the decorous moral orations of the Rev. Mr. Blair."

"And yet Angus Bruce tells me that we cannot judge what the spoken sentences were by the printed page, which he likened to the locomotive with the fire raked out and the steam gone. However, Scotia, you are a good reader. Blair tried them, but he spluttered the fine periods as if he was intoning Gaelic. Angus Bruce has a different method."

"A minister ought to read well;" said Mrs. Rodney, with some sharpness. "It is a part of his business."

"And a very important part. It is said in Neh. viii, 89, that the people wept when they heard the words of the Law; but the preceding verse tells us that those who read—'read them distinctly.'"

"Well, I do not want to hear Dr. Chalmers read this afternoon. I must finish my letter, and send Murdoch with it to the post. We should have an answer in about three days."

Now letters, as well as people, have their fatalities. Their messages are delayed; they are received in unfortunate moods; or they have an open way, and fall into the hands for which they are destined in a good hour. Mrs. Rodney's letter was written under propitious influences. It had a speedy transit, and although the address had been taken from a notice in an Edinburgh paper, it proved to be correct. On the evening of the next day the postman carried it safely to the residence of Lady Jemima Yarrow.

It was received by a mournful-looking young man in a fine livery, and he loiteringly took it to Lady Yarrow. She was sitting alone in a large parlor, one of the four which occupied the principal part of the floor.

It was handsomely but heavily furnished, in the dreary fashion of our grandfathers—no odds and ends of color, or bits of useless beauty ; but solid, dark woods and damask ; with great silver candelabra, and Eastern vases, and bronze work. It was just between the day and the dark, and she had laid down her crotchet, and was sitting very still before the fire. She took the letter without a word, and let it fall upon her lap. Very likely if we knew all the wonderful ties, physical and spiritual, between thoughts and personalities, we should understand how extremely likely and natural it was, that she should be at that very moment speculating about her long-forgotten sister. But as Lady Yarrow had never heard of any theory of mental telegraphy, she attributed the coincidence at once to Providential instruction, and she looked at the form of address, " My dear Sister, " with a vaguely superstitious regard.

The name " Rodney " had a singular interest for her, and she rang impetuously for candles. Before the dignified and deliberate servant had lighted the whole number, and drawn the curtains, she had read the letter through. There was a red spot on her cheeks ; her delicate hands, half-covered with black silk mittens, and splendidly ringed, held the bit of paper in a trembling clasp. She turned to the man as he left the room, and said with sharp authority, " Tell Mistress Ann to come here as soon as possible."

Pending her arrival, she walked slowly up and down the floor with the letter in her hands. She was a tall,

thin woman, with a majestic carriage, and she was very handsomely dressed in black satin and black lace, and a great many gold ornaments. She watched the door impatiently, and when she heard a well-known, deliberate step, she went forward to meet the person she had summoned.

"Come here, Ann. Come here, and sit down. I have just had a wonderful letter. I feel as if it had dropped from the clouds—a letter from my sister."

"I ne'er heard tell before that you had a sister."

"I was sitting wondering whether I had one or not, when Reuben handed me the letter from her. And what think you, our son is her minister; I am very sure of it. Is he not placed at the kirk of Rodney Law?"

"Just sae. Rodney Law, in Fife."

"Then sit down, woman, and let us give an hour to simple wonder. My sister, it seems, has married the laird of Rodney. Woman, I was ignorant of her very name. I heard she had married a cavalry officer, and gone with him to India; and I thought it was young Carstairs. So it seems the lad we quarreled about neither of us got. Well, I am glad of that! Maybe, though, Rodney is a second husband."

"It seems a strange thing to have lost your ain sister sae completely. Death couldna have been mair oblivious."

"Death would have put Dorinda in one of the two places, Ann; and I could, in a fashion, have localized her. But wandering about in India, or wherever army orders sent her, was beyond my care or ability. We have not made a bow to each other, nor spoken, even an ill word, for thirty-five years!—that is a generation syne."

"Ill words would hae been better than nae words ; for ill words may bring good words ; but from silence what can come ?"

"Forgetfulness. Let me tell you, though, when I heard first of Rodney Law, and of our son going there, I had a queer feeling, as if I knew the place. I must, in some bygone time, have heard the name of Rodney. Dear me, Ann ! How much the soul knows if it could only speak plain. We might act more wise like, if it could."

"Not we ! There are times we wad tak' our ain wills and our ain ways, though ane from the dead rose to forbid us. This letter is as the voice of ane from the dead, are you going to heed it ? Is it kind-like and kin-like ?"

"Listen :

DEAR SISTER:

We have been silent long enough to have forgiven and forgotten our ill-feeling. Let us be friends and sisters, as we ought to be. My husband inherited Rodney some years since, and my daughter Bertha is to marry the next heir, in the spring. I have only one other child. I have told her about you, and she wishes to pay you a visit. Let her innocence and good-will make a way between us. Dear Jemima, I await your answer, and am your affectionate sister,

DORINDA RODNEY."

"That is a good letter. Now, then, dinna think awa' and reason awa' every good and kind thought tha' comes knocking at your heart. Send for the lassie. She is your ain flesh and blood, and I'll warrant, she's bonnie and pleasant. It will do you a sight o' good, to hae ane o' your ain family by your side. You never could abide thae Yarrows."

"And she will tell us all about Angus. We shall

hear the truth from her, if so be she doesna dislike him."

"Dislike him! How could that be possible! There is naething to dislike about our Angus. She'll be hearing him preach, onyway, every Sabbath; for kirk-going is as sure as sun-rising."

"Yes, it is a social habit as well as a religious duty in Scotland. Well, then, I shall answer my sister's letter, and send for this one child, who is not going to be married. I have no doubt she will keep our ears tingling."

"If she says aught wrang of our Angus, she will find hersel' in a good atmosphere o' contradiction. Wha are the Rodneys, I wonder?"

"I know not. Some old Fife family, doubtless. The present laird will be setting himself up for the 999th cousin to Noah, I'll warrant. All Fifers are as old as the deluge, or a little older. Let me have a cup of tea, Ann; and you may lace it with a spoonful of French brandy. I am fair upset with finding so many kin-folk in a bit of paper. To think of postmen, having a pound a week, and carrying around messages that God himself may have sent; and will have to guide to weel or woe, or life or death. It is fearsome, Ann!"

She sat down solemnly with the letter in her hand, and began to think over her answer. She was eight years older than her sister Dorinda, and a woman of much stronger character, and more decided feelings. Her memories, unfortunately, had no home flavor to sweeten them. The two girls had been left orphans when very young, and they had spent their girlhood in some fashionable school together. Yet the difference in their age had for long made Jemima exercise

a motherly care and authority over her younger sister, and they were very fond of each other until a lover came, whom both girls believed to be entirely her own. Jemima accused Dorinda of cruel duplicity, in order to gain her lover; and she still believed she had been guilty. She forced herself to recall that dreadful day, which they had passed in mutual recriminations; and the sudden resolve of each never again to speak to the other.

After it, they had gone their own ways without regret and without recall. For no family tie is so variable as that of sisterhood. Where it is strong and real, it is as vital as the cord of life, with which it is indeed strongly bound. Where it is weak and false, it is a cobweb for any touch of fate to knot, or shrivel, or break in two.

Lady Yarrow's thoughts did not all turn kindly backward; the red spot on her cheeks grew more vivid at some memories; her eyes were introspective and somber; she often rose and walked nervously about the room. There were moments when she gave the letter that look which we give to things which trouble our peace. But she knew from the first that she would give way to Dorinda's wish; the real point at issue was the manner in which it should be done. She knew that she ought to meet Dorinda with that noble oblivion, which disdains any allusion to the past; but this was just the very thing she disliked to do. If she could tell her sister all her faults, one by one, it might be easy to forgive them, one by one. But this general amnesty, that neither allowed her to show how grievously she had been wronged, nor yet made shiningly clear how much she had forgiven, did not seem fair to herself.

"Of course, Ann wanted her to write sweetly to Dorinda. Ann wanted to hear about Angus. Ann would welcome any foe, living or dead, who brought her a word about Angus. And Ann had not been slandered to the only man she ever loved, robbed of her life's happiness, all her fate twisted and turned, by a faithless sister. Even if she had, Ann was made of more clay and less spirit than herself. She found it easier and more comfortable to forgive than to carry a covered-up-fire in her heart."

Lady Yarrow could not put such reflections out of her consideration. She was also curious and interested about her sister and brother-in-law, and her two nieces. After all, they were the only kindred she had. As for the Yarrows, they were mere connections by marriage; they were alien to her family; she did not feel any care or liking for them; she never admitted they had any claim upon her. She said audibly to herself: "What if I did marry a Yarrow? I did not marry all the Yarrows. Dorinda's girls are different. They are my nieces. Lord Yarrow's nieces are not a blood-drop to me. And I shall hear about Angus Bruce, doubtless. I want to have some outside opinion, Ann, of course, glorifies him and magnifies his profession. He is immaculate, in her eyes. I am not so blind. If I leave him money, I must know that he is likely to use it well. I do not believe that the red coat of a soldier, or the black coat of a priest covers every excellency. I think I will write to Dorinda now—let me see——"

She went to her desk and took from it some emblazoned paper and a quill pen whose feathers had been tipped with gold. For a few minutes she stood by the fender trimming the point to perfection; then

she resolutely sat down, and wrote in a large, rapid hand :

MY DEAR DORINDA :

Your letter was a good surprise, and when women are as old as we are [Dorinda was always sensitive about being eight years younger than me] such surprises are rare enough, God knows ! I had always thought you married Carstairs, and the name of " Rodney " is not known to me [I am not going to pamper the Rodney pride], but I am very glad to find you are in Fife. The gulf between us is long enough, and wide enough, and this hour I have buried all my wrongs in it forever. [I am not going to let her think I had forgotten I had wrongs]. For, dear Dorinda, we are too near the grave to nurse anger. It would be an ill companion in the hour of death [Dorinda always hated to hear of death]. So send your daughter at once. I will give her a loving welcome. Once more,

Yours affectionately,

JEMIMA YARROW.

This letter arrived at Rodney on the morning of the third day after Mrs. Rodney had written her sister. The storm was over, the world had awakened in sunshine. Its freshness and beauty was something to sing about. The birds were singing about it on every tree—the birds who are our priests, and who chant for us our morning benedictions and our evening psalms. Scotia was out to hear them, and a flock of robins flew singing all around her.

"That is a fortunate sign," she said. "The birds know I am going away, and they approve the journey. I dare say there is a letter from Aunt Yarrow. I hope there is, for father is right ; I do want a change."

When she went home the letter was there, and Mrs. Rodney was in the Colonel's room discussing it. "A very good, kind letter," said the Colonel, who accepted words at their face value. Mrs. Rodney drew her lips into a sideway dissent, but did not voice it. She

felt the spirit in which it had been written, for letters have as much their own atmosphere as persons or as flowers have. There are those whom it is impossible to deceive by written words ; the words retain the animus of their evoking, and the soul of the receiver is sensitive to it. Mrs. Rodney had something of this perception, and she understood the underlying feeling beneath the smooth sentences. "Jemima has not quite forgiven ;" she thought, "but the semblance of good-will may bring good-will, and it is for Scotia's good to believe in it."

She therefore echoed the Colonel's opinion, and accepted with such flattering haste as was possible the extended sceptre of Jemima's favor. It was then Friday, and Lady Yarrow was informed that Scotia would be in Edinburgh on the following Wednesday. Scotia had really a pleasant excitement about the visit, and Mrs. Rodney gave her mind entirely to the preparation of her daughter for it. Bertha's affairs were, for the time being, forgotten ; it was Scotia's dresses, and laces, and jewelry, which occupied every one's attention. Even the Colonel was anxious on the subject. He wished his darling to have every advantage that fine raiment and radiant jewels could give her.

Bertha felt this withdrawal of interest from her concerns, but she accepted it with a sweet resignation. Nobody knew, however, what heart-burnings this attention to Scotia gave her—nobody, but Blair. To him she poured out her selfish little soul in a way which would have shocked her friends beyond speech, had they been aware of it.

"People do things for me," she complained, "as if they were forced to do them ; and yet, Blair, my dear one, the whole house is a willing slave for Scotia.

You would think that no one ever went on a visit before. Such washing, and clear starching, and crimping, you never saw ! Mother has given Scotia a great deal of her finest lace, especially one *bertha* I had set my heart on having ; also her set of Indian rubies ; and she has beside loaned her several diamond ornaments. And I suppose the loan will be permanent. As the first bride in the family, I looked upon these things as naturally mine. I am sure, too, that Father has permitted Scotia unrestricted credit at his Edinburgh banker's. I heard him tell her to let no one in her own station out-dress her. He said he could trust her with the name of Rodney, even in the matter of dress ; and a great deal more of the same talk." Every night the selfish little bride relieved herself of the day's tribulations, in some such complaining epistle to her betrothed.

But the days were not many, and they went rapidly away. Scotia was as busy, and full of happy excitement, as a young girl may lawfully be who is going to make her first flight into the world ; and to whom the world opens up in charming vistas of new relations, and new scenes, and new pleasures. She had but one anxiety. It regarded Angus Bruce. Surely he had heard of her intended journey ; yet Friday night did not bring him to Rodney, nor Saturday either. Then came the Sabbath, and she knew Angus would not permit himself a thought beyond his duties on that day. He did not even glance into their pew. He never lifted his eyes when she came up the aisle. " Monday ; " she thought, " will certainly bring him." But Monday passed without a sign from the minister. " He is angry at me for going into society, I suppose. He imagines I shall do nothing but dance, and dress,

and eat fine dinners, and go shopping, and talk scandal. He might know me better. It is a great offense not to be trusted, and I will think no more of Angus Bruce."

But she could have as easily separated herself from herself as from Angus Bruce. He was in all her thoughts. When Tuesday passed without a visit from him, she was miserable.

"The minister ought to come and give me some good advice;" she said with a forced laugh. "Am I to go into the world and the temptations thereof, without any warnings?"

When she had quite given up all hope of his visit, she saw him coming through the garden with her father. They were strolling slowly amid the bare shrubbery, and their dark figures had melancholy aspects in the gray twilight that were very impressive. She was aware that the steward was waiting for the Colonel's return, and she feared that when her father went away with him, Angus Bruce would go back to the village. Yet she could not bring herself to go to the door and meet him. Surely love might teach him something. If love did not give him a new intelligence, she could not supplement what he ought to understand intuitively.

With one sandaled foot upon the fender, she stood in the glow of the fire-light, waiting in sick anxiety for what the next few moments would bring her. She heard a quick step approaching; her heart beat to it; she heard the door open and close, and she knew who had entered; but she kept her thoughtful, still attitude, and did not lift her eyes till Bruce was at her side.

"I feared you were not coming." The words were

true words. They rang softly, with inflections of loving reproach.

"How could you doubt me? Scotia Rodney, lift your face to mine. Dearest woman on earth, let me look at you, while I venture at last to say, I love you ! I love you with all my heart and soul ! You have the full measure of all the love in my nature. I have loved no other woman ! I never shall love any other ! For time and eternity you are mine, or—I am alone forever. Scotia ! Scotia."

He stood with outstretched arms ; his face was luminous ; his eyes were dilated with rapture ; he was simply irresistible to the girl who loved him. For he had been taken possession of by a spirit, vivid as flame, and pure as heaven. His hands, his eyes, his handsome face, his erect figure, and miraculous powers ; they drew her, as magnets draw.

She had no will but his will. The words he wished her to say, he put into her heart. She lifted her rosy face, she gave him the salutation of her eyes, she inclined her heart and body toward him ; she said sweetly and clearly, without a shadow of conventional hesitation, "Angus ! you know that I love you !"

Yes, he knew she loved him. The words were transformed into a kiss, as she uttered them. They clasped hands, and walked together in the red fire light, as if they were in a new world. There never had been such glory of sunlight as was in their hearts. Mortal man and woman had never sung such songs of joy as they sang together, in broken words, and long fond looks, and still more perfect silence.

The heavenly trance was broken by the entrance of Bertha. "Dear me !" she said, "I had no idea you had company, Scotia. I was coming to tell you

mother's headache is so bad she will not come down stairs to-night. I hope I do not intrude ;" and with a little laugh, and a pretty movement of her body, she went away with the air of one who had committed an indiscretion, and been made to feel it.

"What a good thing I had not sealed my letter ! I must tell Blair about this new affair. I am sure Angus Bruce was making love to Scotia—and Scotia liked it. Fancy Scotia a minister's wife ! Our minister's wife ! Blair, his patron !" She went slowly back to her room, speculating on this fresh subject. She added a postscript to her letter, and then she resolved to go back to the parlor. The Exercise was excuse enough. It was quite time for it. She had a right to suppose she was wanted there.

Yet she said sweetly as she entered—"Shall I be in the way? No? I am so glad. Mother is quite sick. I am uneasy about her. She has tired herself out the last few days."

"You had better say the last few months, Bertha."

"Months, then. Where is Father? I thought it was time for the Exercise. Were you telling any secrets? Have I spoiled fun?"

"Oh, no !" answered Scotia. Angus sat silent, intensely happy, and yet annoyed and disturbed at Bertha's interruption ; for he was just telling Scotia how he had felt himself bound until that very night by his promise to leave Blair Rodney the freest possible choice. "But as I walked with the Colonel an hour ago, he told me that Blair had chosen ; he thanked me for my forbearance, and when I said I had somewhat to say to Miss Rodney, he answered, 'You have a right, sir, to say whatever is proper for Miss Rodney to hear !' I am sure he understood that

"I loved you, Scotia, and that I intended to tell you so."

It was at this point Bertha entered the room, and all further confidence was arrested. For in a few minutes the Colonel and his household joined them, and the Exercise and the supper came in their due course ; and after it, the parting words. Bertha was determined to hear them. She kept close to Scotia's side, and she was unusually effusive to the minister.

She thought she heard all that was said. She heard nothing ; and yet everything was said. It is a clumsy lover that cannot speak with shut lips. Scotia was quite satisfied with her lover's "*adieu !*" It went to her heart by a more direct road than through the winding ear-path.

She was now ready for her journey. It began very early in the morning, and it did not end until the shadows of evening were falling across the dark, stately-looking Yarrow House. Scotia regarded it with interest and without fear. And as she did so, the wide doors were flung open, and she saw advancing through the brilliantly lighted hall, an old lady very magnificently dressed.

She put out her hands to clasp Scotia's hands, she looked at her with kind curiosity, she said pleasantly : "My dear, you are very welcome ! What is your name ?"

And Scotia, bending her beautiful head, answered with a smile, "My name is Scotia !"

IX.

ANGUS BRUCE DECIDES.

But here they found a fervid race
Whose sternly-glowing piety
Scorned paper laws. Their free-bred souls
Went not with priests to school,
To trim the tippet and the stole,
And pray by printed rule.
But they would cast the eager word
From their heart's fiery core ;
Smoking and red, as God had stirred
The Hebrew men of yore.

—*Blackie.*

“WHAT think you of our new niece, Ann ?”
“I think she is a good lassie, and a beauty;
and as our son was born wi' eyes in his head, he has
doubtless found it out.”

“Ah, Ann, what a grand thing youth is ! And yet
the remembrance of it leaves a sigh. She reminds
me of a Jemima Yarrow, long dead and forgotten, and
I look at her and sigh for myself.”

“Yes, yes ! It is aye the past, and the future, we
set store by ; the poor, ill-used present is naething to
us ; and yet it brings us handfuls o' blessings.”

“Do not preach, Ann. Leave that to our son. One
preacher in a family is enough.”

“She kens weel how to dress hersel'. She maist
took my breath from me when she came down the

oak stairway in that floating garment o' white tulle, wi' the silvery stars shot through it."

"And the pale azure foundation—that was my thought. Scotia is well aware that a woman is the least part of herself. I thank my stars——"

"You hae God to thank, Lady Jemima, and the stars are na yours to swear by."

"You are preaching again, Ann. It is well seen where our son gets his pulpit taste. I have asked Scotia all about her own people, and about the Cypars, and others whose names and connections I happen to know, and we have talked of this, that, and the other, but never a word came out of her mouth about Angus Bruce. It is very suspicious. Sometimes she is very quiet. I believe the girl has a secret trouble."

"Man—and woman mair than man—is born to trouble. There is nae happiness here below."

"Nonsense, Ann! It is a sour philosophy that asserts man never is, but always to be, blest. I was once in love, and very near in paradise;"—and the old lady smiled and sighed, and straightened her mittens, and turned her rings around to memories that sent a flood of rose color into her cheeks.

This conversation occurred on the evening of the third day of Scotia's stay with her aunt, and it was interrupted by her entrance. She came in with her work-basket in her hand, and Lady Yarrow nodded approval of her industry. Ann was already seated at the table, hemstitching some cambric for Lady Yarrow's morning gowns; and the atmosphere of the fine room, filled with fire and candle-light, was exceedingly calm and cheerful, and conducive to sympathetic companionship.

Scotia had fallen readily into the ways of a house-

hold so finely and quietly ordered. Her life was likely to be methodical, but not devoid of interest. On the previous evening there had been a quiet dinner party, consisting of Judge Cardiff, and the Rev. Mr. Geddes, and young Captain Ochiltree, and Dr. McManus, one of the bright literary lights which illumined the pages of *Blackwood* and the young reviews ; and after a merry dinner they had gone to a military dance, given by the commander of the castle troops.

To Scotia it had been a very grand and notable affair ; and she had just spent a couple of hours writing her father and mother an account of both dinner and dance. She came into the room with the excitement of the memory in her glinting eyes and rosy face ; and took the low chair opposite Lady Yarrow, which a kindly glance indicated to her, and which placed her within the direct observation of both Lady Yarrow and Ann.

"I like to see you, my dear. Where have you been for the past three hours ?"

"Two hours, aunt. I was writing a letter to my Father, and was telling him all about Mr. Geddes, and the captain and the judge. It was quite a famous party for a country girl, Aunt."

"Yes ; the Law and the Gospel, the Sword and the Pen, crossed knives and forks together. What did you think of the minister ? He is a descendant of that Jenny Geddes who threw her cutty stool at the English preacher's head, when he 'daured' to read prayers in a Scotch kirk. Poor Jenny believed reading prayers to be nothing less than popery."

"And plenty o' good people think wi' Jenny yet, and are na that far wrang."

"Yet, Ann, if Jenny had only listened, instead of

flying into a fishwife passion, she would have heard one of the grandest collects in the English service."

"I ken naething o' col-lects," said Ann sourly. "col-lects are na prayers, and folk hae little sense o' true religion wha fling a col-lect in the face o' Almighty God."

"But a collect is a prayer, Ann."

"I'm doubting it, Miss Rodney. If it be a prayer, why call it out o' its name?"

"Ann," said Lady Yarrow, "Ann, do not be a bigot. The collect Jenny Geddes got into a passion anent, is one of the grandest prayers in the world; and if you will put down your needles, and listen in a proper spirit, I will say it for you." She stood up reverently as a little child, and while Scotia and Ann sat with dropped eyes and still hands, she recited the prayer which had once raised such a tumult in the High Kirk of Edinburgh:

Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name; increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy, keep us in the same, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

"You see," she added, as she resumed her seat, and returned to her usual voice, "I learned it specially to be ready for her reverend great-great-grandson. He is very proud of his descent from the outrageously bigoted old woman, and I was not going to have Jenny Geddes pushed on my approbation. I have had the collect ready for the minister for a year, and he has not yet given me my chance. At the first of our acquaintance, it was the blue and yellow wisdom of the Reviews; and now it is the Free Kirk, and Dr. Chalmers, and again, the Free Kirk."

"He talked to you of nothing else, Aunt. I heard him call Dr. Chalmers the Maccabeus of the Scottish Kirk."

"Yes ; and he got up on his highest horse when I said Chalmers was prelatiic ; and would like nothing better than to make the world over, after the dispensation by Chalmers."

"I have no doubt that Chalmers is a wonderful orator, and I want to hear him preach. I tried to listen to what Mr. Geddes was telling you about some lecture at the university, but I failed to understand. Captain Ochiltree was describing a garrison festivity at the same time."

"He was telling me that Dr. Chalmers was lecturing on the impossibility of order arising out of chaos, without the agency of an intelligent Creator ; and he said, by degrees, not merely the front rows, but the whole class, rose to their feet as he spoke. Certainly a wonderful evidence of his power, for if there is an obstreperous, contumacious, dogged, pragmatial, opinionative, pertinacious, headstrong, unpolished, Vandalic, Hunnish, impertinent set of youths, it is an Edinburgh College class, freshman or sophomore. However, if they have the faults, they have also the excellencies of their race ; though they cannot be ordered or coaxed, they can be reasoned with. A close logician, a fine orator, makes them as dumb beasts before him, and anon, he turns them into reasonable creatures."

"Have you ever heard him speak, Aunt ?"

"Once, on 'The Freedom of the Will'—or rather on its bondage ; for he believes in absolute predestination. He did not move me an inch, for when the freedom of our will is disproved, then responsibility

and future retribution, are also disproved. Tut, tut ! I never yet did wrong, I could not have done right."

"Such points are aboon our wit or wisdom, Lady Jemima ; we shall hae to wait to another life to hae them solved."

"Ann, we do not solve great questions by adjourning them to another life. The Freedom of the Will is a question of tremendous interest for this life." Then she said suddenly to Scotia,—“My dear, you have a minister at Rodney Law, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes ! A very good one.” She blushed from her temples to her finger tips, and let her thimble fall, and stooped to look for it, and thus gave Lady Yarrow and Ann time to exchange an intelligent comment on her behavior.

“You have the Free Kirk controversy also, Scotia?”

“Every one has it. Our minister is very decidedly in favor of a Free Kirk.”

“You have not told me anything about your minister. What kind of a man is he?”

“A very good man.”

“Clever?”

“Yes.”

“Young?”

“Yes.”

“Do you like him?”

“Every one likes him—except cousin Blair Rodney. Blair is in favor of State patronage.”

“I wish you would tell me something definite about the man—I mean the minister. As to his appearance, now?”

Scotia dropped her work, and seemed to be mentally regarding her subject. “He is about twenty-six

years old—perhaps more. He has a noble countenance, fashioned so by a noble soul; and when great words fall from his lips, they flash across his face also. Father admires him very much, and is always glad to be in his company."

"And I dare say he is generally respected?"

"The kirk is now crowded, every service. Mr. Laing used to preach to about forty of our shepherds and tenants. Many who are opposed to Mr. Bruce's views on church government, go gladly to hear him preach. Some come from a great distance. He is quite a famous man in our boundaries."

"Can you tell me anything about his sermons? What makes them so popular?"

"He is so much in earnest, so solemnly in earnest—so terribly, so Calvinistically in earnest, that you feel he believes that it is either heaven or hell for every one present. His words find you out, and they are words that burn themselves into the memory. Even Adam Gowrie, who has his doubts about every Christian man and woman living, admits Mr. Bruce's spirituality and orthodoxy."

"He is called Bruce."

"Yes. Angus Bruce."

Her face was vivid again, her needle shook, she felt her aunt's eyes were upon her, and she made a great effort to appear indifferent to Angus Bruce, as she forced herself to continue:

"He is very cheerful, as a rule, though sometimes melancholy. He dresses handsomely, and has the finest manners imaginable; as grand a man altogether, Aunt, as is between Edinburgh and wherever he is."

"Married?"

"No ; nor, I think, like to be. An old man and woman take care of the manse, but it is a cold, desolate house, and he must miss many a comfort."

"Does he ever come to Edinburgh?"

"Yes."

"Well, my dear, I have no doubt he is all you say—an apostle in the gown and bands of the nineteenth century. Rank exists in the moral, as well as in the social world. This Angus Bruce must be a spiritual prince, and I am glad such a fine fellow is not careless about his dress, which is one of the deadly sins, my dear, among respectable people. And I am glad he has the courage of his own opinions. There is a little Englishman who visits me sometimes—one of those clergymen whom Jenny Geddes waged war on—and he makes me long to be a radical, he is so monstrously conservative. He has swallowed all the thirty-nine articles, and would have done so had there been thirty times as many. At present he has some project for converting the Jews; I should like to tell you what Ann said to him."

"I should like to hear what she said, Aunt."

"He talked a long while, and Ann listened very doucely till he had finished; then she said, 'Mr. Sandford, I'm no clear that we should hurry Providence after any sic fashion. When the Jews are converted, the world is to come to an end; and bad as it is, I'm no carin' to hae the catastrophe in my day.' That settled the young priest, and he took his tea and muffin to more wise-like talk. Now, my dear, what kind of people does this Mr. Bruce preach to? Are his congregation able to appreciate the blessing that has fallen to their lot?"

"There are some families of wealth and cultiva-

tion, but the majority of the listeners are shepherds and fishers."

"Dear me!"

"But Aunt, it is the shepherds and fishers who really appreciate a fine sermon best. No milk for babes for them. They must have the strong meat of The Word. If Mr. Bruce should drop a link in John Calvin's close-wedged creed, they would take him to task about it without scruple—especially the fishermen, who, generally speaking, know the 'Institutes' as well as they know their own fishing nets."

Then the conversation turned upon the fishing village and its inhabitants, and on this subject Ann was singularly interested. "I was born at the seaside," she said, after a long conversation, "and whiles I get land-sick, and hae to go down to the flats near the tide water, and hear the plovers wailing, and the shore-larks calling sadly, through the long wet days, it is a home call to me. I never think it melancholy. Only last night I stood by the open window, and minded myself o' the clear frosty nights, when the boats were like ghosts on the water, and the night was thick wi' stars, and the long flights o' ducks and geese went rustling through the frosty air."

"You make me shiver, Ann. Let us have a little supper, and we will go to sleep and dream of the sea. It is wonderful how often people do dream of it—even those who never saw it."

But Lady Yarrow did not attempt to go to sleep when she had dismissed her niece and her friend. She sat some time thinking, and then went to a desk and wrote the following message to her lawyer:

MR. NOBLE.

Sir: I will have you write at once to the Rev. Angus Bruce, as I now direct. Say thus, and so—the friend who has cared for

you all your life, wishes to know how you stand by the kirk of Scotland, in this, her hour of tribulation? If all forsake her, are you faithful? Are you a follower of John Knox or of Dr. Chalmers? Tell him distinct and plain, if he stands by the kirk his friend will see that he has quick and great advancement in the kirk; and that all his future will be placed beyond worldly care. Tell him just as distinctly, if he deserts the kirk for Dr. Chalmers, he must look for his bite and sup, his place and portion from Dr. Chalmers. And you'll give him three days to think over what is said, and so make his election sure and final.

JEMIMA YARROW.

This letter, written with all the particularity of its instructions, reached Angus Bruce one evening just as he was leaving the manse for Rodney House. It was like a thunder-bolt. He stood some minutes looking at it, with a face full of indeterminate anxiety and strange trouble. Slowly he removed his hat and coat; then he locked the door of the room, and placing the letter before him, began to consider its answer.

The consideration forced him backward, and compelled him to recall the days of his life—a retrospect full of mystery and of unsatisfied longing and curiosity. His first distinct memory was of the large school, where he had spent, not unhappily, the second seven years of his existence. All was clear enough about those years. He still wrote to his old master; in some respects, he remembered this school as other boys remember their home.

It was the first seven years of his life, which were like a vaguely splendid drama, the scenes of which were laid in three different houses. Best of all, he remembered one house standing in the middle of what his childish memory had imagined an endless garden. In his dreams he still wandered there, though never as a boy, because it is not given to man or woman to

be young again, even in dreams. The great brown house, with its lofty rooms, and wide halls, and queer furniture, was yet so real to him that he drew them on the paper by his side, as he recalled their peculiarities.

There were two other houses, but they were far less real; houses among a great many other houses; vast, gloomy, looming through the mists of memory, like Arabian dreams; full of uncertain sounds, and gleaming lights, and the passing of splendidly dressed men and women; whom he watched surreptitiously from some unsuspected hiding place. And from all the *dramatis personæ* connected with these three dwellings, only two had any individuality to him.

Both were women. At the feet of one he used to play. Her splendor and authority affected him yet; he was sensitive to a kind of "hush" that fell upon his spirit whenever he recalled her stately beauty. The other woman had carried him in her arms, and held him upon her knees. He still felt her warm kisses, and awoke from dreams of her, expecting to see her face smiling above his face, and to feel her lips upon his lips.

All these things were still vivid in his remembrance; they had once been more so. What did they mean? Was there any reason why his birth should be hidden? For a moment a shameful doubt and fear came into his heart. Was he the illegitimate child of some noble family? He put the thought angrily away. It was impossible! There had been a law in Scotland forbidding such unfortunate children to enter the ministry; and whether the law had been repealed or not, he was sure that the popular feeling on this subject would have prevented his dedication to

holy office. Besides, what son will permit himself to doubt his mother, even though she be unknown to him ! Angus Bruce was at that moment ready to defend his mother, even against the unbidden suggestions of his perplexed imaginations.

Who, then, was the person who had the right to question his opinions, and the power to advance him to wealth, or leave him to the fate which freedom of thought and action might bring him ? As for the question which was to decide that fate, it was already answered. Future advancement, or certain wealth, could not possibly alter the decision he had already made. The Kirk was right. The State was wrong. He was on the side of the Kirk, whatever the result might be.

At this point he remembered Scotia. Rapid advancement and a certain income meant a speedy realization of all his dreams of married bliss. He drew his brows together, as a man may do for a passing pain ; but the next moment he had put the temptation behind him. "No ; not even for Scotia will I deny the truth that is in me ! Nor would Scotia desire me to do it. I know the integrity of her noble heart. And as for man's promise or man's threats, I will neither regard nor fear it. Right is right. Right, whatever befall, and my conscience must be satisfied, though my heart go hungry, even to the grave."

He put the letter in his pocket and walked rapidly to Rodney House. They were discussing Scotia's letter when he arrived. And there had also been one from Lady Yarrow, expressing her delight in Scotia's society. "She is altogether charming, and after I have shown the civil and military lords of Edinburgh

what a Fife beauty is, I am going to take her to Court, and fill the Court with envy and admiration."

The Colonel was quite excited over his favorite's success and happiness, and Mrs. Rodney looked at her sister's letter with a new-found pleasure. As for Bruce, he could easily imagine his love in that robe of white tulle and silver stars. He could place her upon the arm of some handsome officer in splendid tartans, and estimate the temptations to which she was exposed. He believed that her love for him would preserve her spotless from all taint of pride, or vanity, or fashion; but yet, he would have been glad if she had not been led into such great temptation. On the whole, the news he heard did not make easier the decision forced upon him. Such experiences of life were not the fit preparation for the wife of a minister of the Gospel. Might he not lawfully put aside the public question for the private one? The honor of the kirk for the spiritual good of the woman who was to be his wife? He did not give a moment's place to such appeals, but the keen heart conflict affected him socially; he could not sympathize so cordially with the Colonel's moods, and the visit was so constrained that he left very early.

"Mr. Bruce did not like to hear of Scotia's going out so much into the world. I could see how annoyed he was, at the mention of Castle balls, and Court balls, and such grand festivities!" said Bertha.

"The minister was bored to death with conversation so far away from his own interests. He simply cannot conceive of people caring for any subject not connected with Dr. Chalmers and the Free Kirk."

"You are mistaken, Father. He was dreadfully annoyed about Scotia."

"What has the minister to do with your sister's affairs?"

"Perhaps more than you imagine. I think he is in love with Scotia."

"Bertha, you have one idea at present, that is love. Do not think that every man in the world is in the condition of Blair. Mr. Bruce is too much occupied with the concerns of the kirk, to give any attention to young girls. I do not suppose he sees them."

The Colonel spoke with great irritation, and to prevent further discussion of the subject, rang the bell for the Exercise.

In spite of Scotia's and Lady Yarrow's letters, the atmosphere of the house was restless and unhappy. For as one note out of tune in a key-board can fret the whole music played on it, so, also, can one heart out of sympathy in a household fret the whole happiness to discord. And Bertha had divined the minister's disapproval by her own envious pain; her jealousy of Scotia's success and happiness, having some kinship with the natural jealousy of a lover, who knows others are basking in the light he is shut away from.

She called her mother to her room, and did not scruple to express her sense of disappointment and loss. "Scotia is having so many fine chances. Dear mother, why did you not think of Aunt Yarrow for me?"

"Bertha, your envious temper makes me angry. You said you wished to marry Blair, and be Mistress of Rodney. I told you how to accomplish that destiny—the way was through your sister's heart. You took it, and reached your desire. Hitherto you have been satisfied with it, are you sorry because your sister is happy?"

"You never told me about my Aunt Yarrow—until I had chosen Blair. And Scotia did not give up anything for me. Blair had chosen me when I spoke to Scotia."

"Blair asked Scotia to marry him, before he asked you. Scotia refused him for your sake."

"Mother, it is too bad to say such cruel things. Every one knows Blair fell in love with me the first hour he came to Rodney."

"You have told every one so."

"Well then, if Blair asked Scotia first, he can marry Scotia. I will not marry him."

"Do as you wish, my dear."

"Mother, how can you be so unkind?"

"Bertha, how can you be so selfish and ungenerous? To sympathize in Scotia's pleasure is not to lessen your own. To care only for yourself is to care for a very mean person. Go away now, and consider your own heart; I am tired. I will talk no more to-night."

During this conversation the minister was walking rapidly through the park. His feeling on leaving the unaccordant company was one of mental nausea. But the mere exchanging of the light and warmth of human life for the cool spaces of the night and the solemn company of the stars, made him at once a citizen of a different world, and inverted in a step his relationships. All that was spiritual in his nature became dominant. The sober realm of the leafless trees was full of soft mysterious sounds, that fell as gently on his troubled heart as tired eyelids fall upon tired eyes.

He really had no doubts about Scotia. He judged her as incapable of deceiving him as he was of deceiving her. The vague restlessness of his heart arose

from the change in his circumstances. He knew that one change often brings others, and he peered vainly into the future to see where change might become stability again.

When he came to the little gate that opened into the kirk-yard he paused a moment, and then passed through it. On the bare white flags he set his feet gladly, their clean solidity, in place of the soft muddy roadside, suited the decided tenor of his thoughts. He looked up at the plain, granite kirk, devoid of all material beauty, and with spiritual love clasped it to his heart. Alone, amid the dead, through storm and darkness, the building had stood for centuries ; a sacred symbol of that living church which was the Bride of Christ.

Would he put king or kaiser, queen or woman, above Christ in his own church ? He would die joyfully rather than do it. Gold and advancement, love and marriage, Scotia and home, these were fair offers ; but he would not market celestial rights with merchant measure for them. If he did so, he might indeed live in fatted comfort, and slide into a cushioned grave, but what of the after-reckoning ! He could not pay it with an eternity of remorse.

Nor would he wrong the martyrs whose blood had glued the sacred stones of his stout mother-kirk. Walter Myln, Patrick Hamilton, Rullion Green, the many-wandering Veitch, and all the Covenanting men-of-war, they called to him out of the past, and he answered them. And as he did so, he lifted his pale, rapt face to the lonely, solemn building—a face full of devotion and strength. Then he breathed with a more ample breath, he looked forward with a bolder scope, and without further parley

with himself, walked with firm and rapid step through sodden turf, and miry road, straight to his manse and his study. It was now easy to answer the letter which had at first confounded him, and he took his pen and wrote :

MR. NOBLE.

Sir : I do not require three days to consider your letter. I should be a poor son of Scotland, and a poor son of her noble kirk, if I was still considering a subject that has stirred every heart from Shetland to Galloway for weeks and months. I believe the Kirk of Scotland to be absolutely right in asserting that she can have no superior in things spiritual, but the Lord Christ. Scotsmen will not have their kirk a hanger-on to the State, bound to her by a golden link, a paltry *regium donum*. Truth is a dangerous thing to say, but when God lends it a voice, it flies from heart to heart like fire. The State will find this fire unquenchable ! Say to the friend who has so nobly cared for me all my life, that I regret he thinks not with me—that I love and honor him for the kindness, wisdom, and generosity which has guided and sheltered my childhood, youth, and manhood. Whatever tie of kinship or friendship binds us, he may now lawfully throw off its obligations. My gratitude is for benefits extending through life and into eternity ; it must therefore have a duration equal to its claim. And this is my sincere and final answer to your communication.

Respectfully,

ANGUS BRUCE.

This letter went to Lady Yarrow's bedroom with her early cup of tea. She sipped her tea, and ate her toast as she read it. "The laddie is in a blaze of spiritual temper. I'll warrant he is praising himself for it. He thinks, too, that I am a man !" and Lady Yarrow laughed softly at the mistake. "If I had been a man, I would have been ordering him here and there, and telling him to do thus and so, all the live-long time. A man could not have kept the secret of his own good deed a month after the lad was able to

say 'I thank your Honor!' The word 'I' would have weighed so heavy on his under lip, it would have drawn after it—'I feed you.' 'I clothe you.' 'I pay your school bills.' 'You ought to praise and glorify me exclusively and continually.' That was the way with Lord Yarrow and the two nephews he sent to sea. Poor motherless bairns! But Yarrow was no exception. Very few can keep to themselves any good thing they do. It whirls about in their memory, it looks out from their eyes, it burns on their tongue, and at last it steps out, smirking and smiling from between their lips. In this respect I am a Pharisee. I can honestly thank God, I am not as other men!—nor even as other women. I have kept my good deed secret for twenty-five years. Even when I heard the lad preach so grandly, I held my own tongue. And Ann wonders whatever kind of flesh and blood I am made of!"

With a smile of satisfaction she folded the letter and put it under her pillow. Then she had her tray removed, and lay down for her second sleep. About eleven o'clock Ann entered the room, and Lady Yarrow lifted herself slightly, and said:

"I have had a letter from our son, Ann. A grand letter. It is just what I expected. He has stood his first trial bravely. Now, Ann, I am going to give you a surprise. I am going to send you on a great message. You must go and tell Angus the whole truth, and we will see how his reverence takes it."

"My dear lady, is not one trouble enough for one year? The puir lad is to lose baith kirk and manse, and fortune; for if he goes out wi' the protestors next May, he leaves kirk and manse behind him, and you empty his pockets. And ever the big trouble brings a lot o' little troubles that no one kens about; and

whiles these wee worries are the worst o' all to thole. The lad has plenty o' worry. I will na add ane to them. No! I'll be silent forever rather."

"Ann! you must go and see him next week."

"I'll no go near him."

"Yes you will, Ann. Help me to dress, and then we will talk over the plan I have made; and I'll read you his letter. It is a fine letter, Ann. You will have to trust me in this matter, woman. Have I ever been unkind to the lad?"

"You have been fayther and mither, baith, to him."

"Yes, I have. Is it likely I will turn against him now? Ann, you will have to go to Rodney Law next week. There is nothing to fear. Oh woman, how faithless you are! Do you want me to go?"

"No, I can travel the road mysel'."

X.

BRUCE FINDS A MOTHER.

" Ah, God ! My child ! my first, my living child !
I have been dreaming of a thing like thee
E'er since a babe, upon the mountains wild
I nursed my mimic babe upon my knee."

—*Wade.*

" Bright as his manly sire my son shall be
In form and soul ; but ah ! more blest than he !
Thy fame, thy worth, thy filial love at last
Shall soothe this aching heart for all the past."

—*Rogers.*

THE relationship between Lady Yarrow and Ann was one about which many people had once speculated, and Scotia could not help, in her companionship with the two women, wondering what singular bond of interest or affection made their friendship so close and lasting. For the thought of kinship did not seem possible. Lady Yarrow was one of her own family, a woman of high birth and fine breeding ; moreover, one who had opened her soul to every wind of life that brought on its wings wider thought or cultivation. Everything about her friend Ann pointed to lowly birth, insufficient education, and those positive opinions and prejudices which are usually found in primitive natures.

Yet Lady Yarrow exacted from her household the same respect for her friend as she did for herself. If

she sat at the head of the table, Ann sat at the foot. Ann had the most positive authority over everything. She engaged or dismissed servants as she thought proper ; she examined and paid all bills ; she took the whole burden of the housekeeping upon her shoulders. She was Lady Yarrow's closest companion ; they spoke to each other with perfect freedom and familiarity ; and yet Ann rendered her friend the service of a maid, and very often received, with apparent indifference, orders and reproofs, which indicated that beneath the surface of equality there was a radical social difference which both acknowledged.

Lady Yarrow made no explanations to Scotia on this subject ; probably the position had become so natural to herself that she forgot any explanation was necessary. Yet there had been a time when society had been rebellious about Mistress Ann, and people of pronounced social views had refused to accept her.

Then surmises had been many and unpleasant ; they had died out ; they had begun again ; they had finally passed away altogether ; and Lady Yarrow's acquaintances had accepted Ann for all she required, which was not very much—her place at table and her chair in some quiet corner, where she sat with a piece of work in her hands, if the company were informal. In more ceremonious gatherings, Ann usually disappeared when dancing and card playing began.

"My friend has some fixed opinions, and she is embayed in them like a ship in ice," explained Lady Yarrow, "but she is conscientious, and we must respect her scruples."

All wonders and queries had, however, long been over when Scotia visited her aunt ; and Mistress Ann in her black silk dress and white lace cap and neck-

erchief, was as much a part of Yarrow House as was Lady Yarrow herself. She was a constant source of interest to Scotia. Sometimes she fancied she must have known her when she was a child—a child too young to individualize the forms that made part of her small world. She was much younger than Lady Yarrow ; a very handsome woman nearing fifty years of age. Her features were grandly formed, and had an expression serious and placid. She was tall and slightly stout—a comely, comfortable presence : without dignity, without pride, and equally without self-consciousness.

Although usually very calm, she was much moved by Lady Yarrow's positive determination to send her to Rodney Law. But she did not let her feelings 'run into motion' as nervous people do. She sat still, her hands were folded on her lap, her eyes were introspective ; her face was like a piece of dull water which reflected nothing. Yet she was feeling intensely. Nor were her feelings such as breed sorrow. They had in them great hopes, the craving of devoted yet unsatisfied affection, and a good portion of personal pride ; only Ann was a coward, and to 'let well alone' seemed to her a sure and desirable good. She feared to risk all in order to gain all. Life, with its secret joy and its hidden spring of happiness, was so pleasant, so peaceful ! Why should she call change to herself and others.

After a long reflection she rose slowly to her feet and began to undress. Anon, she lifted her Bible, and with conscious, purposeful deliberation opened it. The portion her eyes selected did not alter her countenance. She laid down the book with an air of "I thought so," and said decidedly :

"I'll no go a footstep. I'm no sent there yet. If my Lady canna wait for the opening of the door, she will hae to break it open wi' her ain hand. That settles the matter i' my mind."

And it did settle it. Ann knew nothing about worry. She never let the sorrow of yesterday pile itself into mountains high, while she lay tossing on her hot pillow. She had the wisdom denied to this nervous generation, who let the obstacle to be encountered at some future time triumph over them in advance. The evil of the day was sufficient for the day, with Ann, and she fell asleep telling herself "maybe something extronar" will happen.

In the morning something extraordinary did happen. As Lady Yarrow was dressing, Ann let her silver comb fall, and it stood straight up. "You are going to hae a strange visitor, Lady Jemima," she said, as she picked up the little diviner, and looked curiously at it.

"Ann, Ann! in all things you are too superstitious. What can the comb know of a coming visitor?"

"Ken you wha is behind the comb? Do we see a' the hands that shape the day's doings? Men will hae to be wiser than what is written, ere they tell us why certain signs always go before certain events."

And though Lady Yarrow smiled at Ann's superstition, she was not insensible to its influence. "It is such a lovely day," she answered, "I will put on my best velvet suit," and so she attributed to the weather a motive whose real source lay deeper down and farther away. "I have just sent Scotia to dress for the carriage, and we may make some calls—or we may do some shopping—or we may have a swift drive as far as Roslyn. Anything pleasant is likely, Ann."

She took a last look at her still handsome figure in its handsome drapery, and then, as she left the room, said, "I will wait for Scotia in the breakfast parlor. She ought not to be long. A bonnie lassie is soon dressed. Tell her where to find me, Ann."

"I forgot, Lady Jemima, to tell you something—there is a letter from Yarrow Bell. Jim Haddon says he hasna siller enough to care for the sheep through the winter."

She was half way down the stairs, but she turned with a laugh. "All complain of the want of siller, Ann, but none of the want of sense. Send the man whatever he needs—and send Scotia to me."

As she spoke, the footman threw open the main entrance, and a young man in the uniform of the Royal Highlanders, walked, with a splendid air of youth and of owning all the world, through the wide hall into the parlor. She followed him as quickly as possible. He came to meet her with a letter in his hand—bare-headed, smiling, with just a touch of that patronage which youth is apt to assume toward age.

"I should know you without introduction"; said Lady Yarrow, looking eagerly into the bright, pleasant face. "You cannot be Captain James Forbes, but you must be his son."

"I am the son of Lord James Fraser Forbes. He was Captain Forbes when he knew you many years ago."

She looked at him with a strange yearning. This fine soldier might have been her son, but for her sister Dorinda. She bade him sit down, in a voice that trembled with emotion, and then read the letter, that had come years and years too late.

As her eyes were bent upon it, Scotia entered the

room. Captain Forbes had been looking a little bored, but instantly his heart was in his face. He glanced impatiently at Lady Yarrow, who suddenly became aware of the present and its demands. She took Scotia by the hand, and said :

“Captain Forbes, I make you known to my niece, Miss Rodney. Scotia, help me to welcome Captain Forbes, the son of a very dear old friend. Now you can improve your introduction, and let me read over again my letter.”

Youth and beauty are quick friends, and what they find to say and how they say it is simply a wonder to slow and grave proprieties. Lady Yarrow took her letter upstairs and dropped a few tears on the kindly, sorrowful words. Then she locked them away, and touched her eyes with some reviving lotion, and went back to the parlor with a smile. Why should any one now suspect the longing pain in her heart.

Scotia and the young captain were standing together at the window. Their voices were blending like music in merry laughter as she entered. Something in the passing crowd had touched their sense of the ridiculous, and the hearty laugh, with its rippling echo, woke strange memories in the old lady's heart.

For the young man was singularly like his father. Just so he had looked and laughed, just so he had smiled at her, years and years, and long years ago. She was then as young as Scotia, and she had more than Scotia's beauty. For a moment the young people did not perceive her entrance, and she regarded them with a wistful speculation. They made a handsome picture. Scotia's dark blue cloth pelisse, and bright flowing hair contrasting finely with the captain's scarlet jacket, and dark green tartans, and jeweled dirk and

philabeg. Both were tall, and Forres was dark as his famous namesake, *Dhu* James Forres.

Lady Yarrow asked the young man to ride with them. She put aside all thoughts of calling, or shopping, and they drove merrily out to Roslyn—the carriage thrown open to the fresh air and sunshine; the ladies in the back-seat, beautiful amid their many colored furs and wraps; young Forres facing them, grandly indifferent to wind or cold; his fine figure bent toward his entertainers, his face lighted with pleasure, his tongue never failing him for the right word, his hands always ready to tuck back Lady Yarrow's falling furs or fold anew some comfortable wrap.

There was now no more talk of Rodney Law, and Ann wisely did not introduce the subject. Day by day, Lady Yarrow liked young Forres better. In a week she was calling him 'Jamie,' as she had once called his father. She made dinner parties in his honor, and dancing parties for his pleasure. Ann could see that he was in love with Scotia, and that Lady Yarrow favored his love, and was determined no Dorinda should mar this marriage. She had once found pleasure in speculating about her niece and the minister, but she was now as one who had never heard the name of Angus Bruce.

And Ann sighed as she reflected how often "something happens" to alter plans that seemed sure and certain. The fact is, no event bears trifling with. "Almost and very-near have aye been great liars," she said. "I'm feared Angus will be forgotten, but what need to worry? A man may woo where he will, but he must wed where his fate is."

It was now near the New Year, and there had been an intention that Scotia should return to Rodney

House for the festival, spend a week there, and then accompany Lady Yarrow to London. The project had often been discussed before the arrival of Captain Forbes ; after his arrival, Lady Yarrow avoided the subject ; and when it was forced upon her attention she objected so positively to it that Scotia felt obliged to abandon the plan.

"I dislike to have my visitors break their favor in two," she said a little crossly, "and I do not know what day precisely I may feel able to begin the journey. It is possible we may start before Christmas and spend Christmas with friends in Yorkshire, and the New Year with the Cunliffes at Oxford ; and so, after a fortnight's visiting, reach London about the 7th of January."

"Then I could meet you in London, Lady Jemima. There is a deal to be done here, if we go from London to Yarrow Bell. The furniture must be covered, and the plate sent to the bankers, and the costly hangings and such like, put where moth and rust willna corrupt them."

Between two women so fixed in their opinions, Scotia, as a guest, had very little power to gainsay plans, which were said to be made for her pleasure. She was much disappointed ; she longed to see Angus ; and had hoped during her short visit to at least arrange matters so that he might write her a letter occasionally. Certainly, she respected that nicety of honor which had kept him silent until the Colonel's permission to woo her had been obtained ; and yet, there were hours in which she wished he had dared a little for love's sake. Indeed she had expected so much from him, and the sight of the always disappointing postman made her heart hot and her eyes

twinkle with suppressed tears. Before the New Year, disappointment had become anger. It might be true that he could not love her much, if he loved not honor more ; but a letter of assurance would have been more satisfactory than silence ennobled by a sentiment.

So then, Lady Yarrow's decided aversion to her return home in the middle of her visit did not disappoint Scotia as much as it would have done if Angus, instead of longing and watching for her arrival, had written just one word, "Come !" She was further reconciled to Lady Yarrow's intentions by a letter from Bertha, which announced a visit from Blair.

"Blair is coming !" She wrote the words in capitals. "The poor, dear fellow cannot endure our separation any longer. He says he shall have a very positive talk with Father, and insist upon our marriage much earlier than the last of May. Father will of course object, but I think Blair will get his own way. Blair has such a firm will," etc., etc. Five pages about Blair, and ten pages about Bertha, and half a page for the rest of the household.

Considering everything, then, Scotia felt it would be best to fall in cheerfully with Lady Yarrow's designs ; and she did so with all the pleasurable anticipations of which her happy nature was capable. This mood was all that Lady Yarrow required to arouse her to the point of movement. In less than a week they were on their way to Yorkshire, and Ann was alone in the darkened and almost deserted house.

For some days she was busy about the business arrangements which she had indicated as necessary—packing away fine hangings and napery, sending

silver plate and rare books to the bankers, covering furniture and pictures, darkening rooms and arranging the household on the "absent footing," by dismissing some servants, and readjusting the work and wages of others.

The work occupied her until Christmas, a festival she conscientiously refused to publicly acknowledge in any way. But yet, as she sat that Christmas night, alone in the shrouded parlor, with her tired hands dropped on her lap, and her eyes dropped upon the blazing coals, she could not avoid thoughts that wandered far back and far off, to dreamy shepherds on the hills of Palestine; and happy angels singing above them. And being an intensely human woman, her heart stirred with warm, sweet sympathy for the young mother with her first-born son in her breast; and she gave one short cry of pain, and stood quickly up as if she were hurried or impatient.

"I must go! I must go and see my ain dear lad! I'll no wait langer, for any woman born."

For a few minutes she stood thus, her strong face firmly set; her hands clasped against her chin; her figure, her air, the outward gaze of her eyes, all indicating a purpose as positive as it was sudden.

She did not waste her feeling by expressing it. Lady Yarrow would have walked it away. Ann sat down again, and with prudent courage examined the thing which she had suddenly resolved to do. The greatest holdback was the dread of poverty. Ann had known what it was to have "just enough to keep body and soul together"; and she audibly commented "In sic a strait the soul doesna grow."

She had intended to leave Edinburgh for London on the following morning. She went to Fife—to

Rodney Law. The days were at their shortest, and it was quite dark when she reached the little village. "Where is the manse?" she asked of the first child she met, and he answered, "The wee gray house in the garden, ayont."

The wee gray house was not a hundred yards away. She gave the lad a penny and walked toward it. She was not even yet quite sure of what she would do or say. She had provided herself with an excuse for troubling the minister, if her heart failed her—or warned her—even in his presence. She thought she had prudence and self-control sufficient for all the visit might entail.

The little gate clashed noisily in the still night, and a dog some way off asked what was the matter? It disturbed no one in the manse. A much drearier home it would have been hard to imagine. The garden was bare and neglected. There was no light visible, except a pale glimmer in one of the front rooms. As she neared the door, she saw that it came from a candle, standing on a small round table.

Angus sat at the table intently reading a pamphlet—Dr. Chalmer's last manifesto. She thought it no harm to look long at him—to note the cheerless fire burnt low and gray—the poor, plain furniture—and above all, the calm beautiful countenance of the man reading. She looked until her heart would no longer bear this silent, stolen survey; and with a resolute hand she lifted the knocker, and let it fall once.

Our lives are in a mist, and it is often in the dark that Destiny calls upon us. When Ann had knocked twice, Angus rose with a reluctant movement and went to the door. He had no presentiment of the

approach of any Fate ; even when he saw the middle-aged gentle woman standing at his door, his soul was not in the least degree prescient. Perhaps it was absent ; for are we not all conscious of days or hours when we are "not all there"—when we simply use our intellect, but are at a loss for some power that is subtler than intellect ? Angus looked at his visitor interrogatively, as he said :

"I am the minister. Do you wish to see me ?"

She answered "Yes," and followed him into the parlor.

There for a moment they stood looking at each other, Ann's heart filling, and filling, until it forced her to speak :

"Sir ! Sir ! I hae come to tell you something ! I hae kent you a' your life."

"Mistress, sit down, sit down. Take off your cloak and your bonnet, and I will have the fire built, and a cup of tea made. Are you tired ? Have you come far ? Are you hungry ?"

In all these questionings he was conscious of that peculiar reluctance to face finally some decision long delayed ; wished, and yet put off ; held in abeyance, not unwillingly, because certainty may perchance destroy and not fulfill the illusions of uncertainty. Ann had a similar reluctance to hurry, though arising from different causes. She sat quiet while Bruce called Grizel, and had the fire replenished and his tea tray brought in. He made his visitor the first cup and said :

"Drink it, and then tell me all. I have been expecting to hear what I do not know ever since I received a certain letter."

"The letter anent the Free Kirk ?"

"The same. I know not what to call you." He smiled pleasantly at her over his own tea cup, and she answered :

"I'll gie you a name ere lang—that is, if you want it. Maybe though, you dinna care for what is past and gane ; some folk dinna."

"I have forgotten very little of what is past, and you will be my friend if you make all clear to me."

"What do you remember best of a' ? "

"A great house in a garden. There were many bee-skeps in the garden, and I was punished one sunny afternoon for going near them. I think that is my first clear memory."

"The house is the Bell. It was I—I mysel' wha gied you your punishment for meddling wi' the bees. You hae forgot the kisses that made up for the palmies, I see."

She looked at him with clear shining eyes full of love, and Angus steadily regarded her as he continued :

"I remember two women—one used to nurse me on her knees, and carry me in her arms, and kiss me in the dark, and kiss me in the morning, and I think—I think——"

"Nay, you may be sure of it, my ain dear lad ! It was I that nursed you on my knees, and carried you in these arms ! And I hae carried you in my heart o' hearts, so many years, and such lang years ! Oh, Angus ! Angus ! Oh my dear, dear Angus ! Noo, canna you tell—what to call me ? "

He went to the weeping woman and took her hands, and stooped his face till it touched her face, and said upon her lips :

"Mother ! You are my mother ! "

Then the unspoken and unsatisfied love of twenty years found speech and action. She sobbed out in his arms many a tender word long unfamiliar to her tongue ; she gave her heart its fill of mother joy. She had a few moments of divine unreasonableness, in which her son was her babe again.

Angus was profoundly touched by her emotion. Loving is in many respects a habit, and Angus had the habit of mother-love to learn ; but he did not suffer his mother to know this. He brought her back to the straight lines of life by the homely duties of the tea-table. And while she dried her eyes and composed her face, he looked with a sad curiosity at her. In spite of her rich dress, he perceived she was of lowly birth. Indeed, he knew the fisherwomen of that coast so well that he had no hesitation in placing her among them. Then he understood how deeply he had cherished the hope that his unknown parentage was obscure, because of its nobility.

Since he had loved Scotia, he had clung to this idea, and ransacked his memory for proofs of it. Naturally, he believed that Colonel Rodney would be influenced by the conditions of his birth. For though nominally and in society his office made him the peer of any noble, there were deeper considerations when it came to a question of marriage and relationships. Perhaps his mother divined something of his disappointment ; she looked into his face, and setting her cup steadily down, said :

“ I was only a poor girl, Angus—a poor fisher girl.”

“ You are my own mother.”

“ And your fayther——”

“ Tell me of my father.”

“ Your fayther was the bravest fisherman that ever

sailed a boat out of Largo Bay. Listen, and I will tell you how he died ! One stormy afternoon we heard the noise o' men crying on a wrecked ship. It is a fearfu' noise, Angus, the noise o' men crying out at sea ; and your fayther went down to the beach, and I went wi' him, and you were in my arms, folded tight in my plaidie. And there was a ship on her beam-ends, and the men clinging to her spars and masts, and your fayther said just twa words—' Wha's ready ? ' and his brother Steve and his mate Torry stepped out, and stood beside him—and nae others. I couldna speak a word ' yes ' or ' no,' but I held you close, and looket in his face, and he pulled the plaidie awa' in a hurry, and kissed you twa or three times ; and then mysel'—and the next moment he was wi' the men, pushing the boat to the water edge. They saved twa boat loads, and they went down wi' the third. I was on the beach a' night lang ; but it wasna till the morning tide the bodies came hame. Your fayther and your Uncle Steve lie thegither in Largo kirk-yard. They did their duty, and they died in the doing o' it. What mair can be said ? ”

“ They were brave, good men. I thank God for such kin ! ”

“ And you are na shamed o' coming out o' the fishing boats !—you, a placed minister ? ”

“ Christ called Peter and our ain blessed Saint Andrew when they were casting their nets into the sea. God make me worthy to follow after such men ! God make me worthy of the father you gave me ! my dear mother.”

He said the word slowly, as if tasting its new, sweet flavor ; and, as he did so, stooped forward and took her hand. “ Now you must tell me, who has been our

friend ; who has cared for you, and educated me, and given me my portion among God's servants."

"One day I was in Edinburgh selling herring, and a braw lady stopped me, and said,—‘Let me look at your bairn, woman.’ And she took your wee face atween her gloved hands and kissed it ; and when I wouldna tak’ siller from her—for I was selling fish and didna need awmous—she said, ‘Come so and so, on the morn, and I will maybe be your friend.’

"So it happened that I pleased her, and she was a masterfu’ woman, and she made me leave a’ and stay wi’ her. And she was that fond o’ you that I had many a jealous heartache for it ; but I kent it was for your good, and I tholed her claim then, and hae done, ever since."

"Are you still her servant ?"

"Servant ? Na, na ! Fisher lasses dinna serve mortal woman for just siller. I am her helper, her housekeeper, her friend, her sister. We hae had nae secrets from each ither for more than twenty years. Baith thegither we hae watched o’er you. Baith thegither we hae heard you in the school-room and the kirk. You are ‘our son.’"

"And her name, mother ?

"I canna tell you that, just yet."

He did not press the question, but rather tried to persuade her to remain over Sabbath with him. After some hesitation the request was granted, and then the conversation was renewed and drifted to the kirk controversy, and Angus told his mother of the letter he had received ; but got no further information regarding its stipulations.

In the morning the news of the minister's visitor spread quickly over the village, and anon reached

Rodney House ; and the Colonel and Mrs. Rodney sent a polite invitation for Mrs. Bruce and the minister to dine with them. Angus insisted on its acceptance, and indeed there was no reason for him to feel anything but pride in the quiet, handsome, richly dressed woman whom he presented to the Rodneys as his mother.

Blair and Bertha were absorbed in their own affairs. Blair gave her but slight attention ; Bertha watched her furtively as she listened to Blair. She knew intuitively that she was a woman of the people, born in poverty ; her speech betrayed her ; and where and how, then, had she acquired her repose, her fine manner, and her sense about dress ? She speculated on and watched their visitor all evening. And she wondered if such a stylish young man as Angus Bruce was not ashamed of her ? ”

Angus was not in the least ashamed of her. He took her on his arm to kirk, he gave her into the charge of his chief elder saying, “ This is my mother, Mr. Boyd. Put her in the minister’s pew.” And his love grew apace. It had always been in his heart, all it needed was the visible object to cling to. It sprang into life with her kiss, and her smile, and her tender story of his father’s death. When she left him on Monday morning he was as proud of her as if she had been a duchess. He was as sorry to lose her, as if they had lived all their lives together. He felt himself to be a far richer and happier man, and was as light-hearted as if he had come into a great fortune. What, now, was the loss of that unseen and unknown friend ? He had found a mother in her place.

And while he thus mused, Bertha was writing to her sister a letter which was greatly occupied with the

minister. "Only think! Mr. Bruce brought his mother to Rodney House last Saturday night—a very vulgar old woman, who speaks broad Scots, when she does speak; and who, I am sure, he must feel to be a great drawback. Fancy such a mother-in-law! Thank heaven! Blair has no mother."

"What news has come in your sister's letter, Scotia?" asked Lady Yarrow. "I see you draw your brows together, and shrug your shoulders very expressively."

"Bertha says, our minister brought his mother with him to Rodney House last Saturday night, and that she is a vulgar old woman, who speaks broad Scots."

They were at the Cunliffe's, in Oxford, when Scotia made this remark. It affected Lady Yarrow beyond all seeming reason. She flew into a passion with Bertha. "Is the girl so ignorant as not to know that some of our best people choose to speak their own dialect? I speak broad Scots mysel' when I am in a passion; and I wad gie her a mouthfu' or twa o' it wi' right gude will, if she was here the noo. I wad that, the scornfu' cutty!"

All day afterward Lady Yarrow was very unreasonable. She walked about the room muttering to herself wonders and queries, in which Ann had the greatest share; and that night she said:

"Scotia, I am tired of these smooth-lipped, trig, smug, well-appointed priests: with their long black coats falling over their slender hams even to their ankles; and their dainty neck-ties and simpering lisp. Let us get away from these Southern Square-caps.

"They are always politely sneering at our universities, and asking civil questions about Scotland; as if

we were foreigners ; and yet most of them have been in Scotland.

“ They know as much about Scotland as,

A fly that's bred
In a grocer's sugar-cask, may comprehend
Of honeyed heather and of mountain bees.

We will awa' to London. Jamie may meet us there. And I want to see Ann. Yes, I want very much to see Ann. I wonder whatever the woman has been up to ! ”

“ Up to ? ”

“ Yes—what she has been doing. I have heard little from her. Mistress Ann and I will have to say a great deal to each other.”

“ I dare say Ann has had a very stupid time.”

“ I dare be bound that she has had a very delightful time—a thoroughly satisfactory time, to herself. And I want to know all about it.”

XI.

THE MINISTER'S TROUBLES.

“ Even you yourself to your own breast shall tell
Your crime, and your own conscience be your hell.”

—*Dryden.*

“ My ugly guilt flies in my conscious face,
And I am vanquished, slain by bosom-war.”

—*Dryden.*

“ Doubt's the worst tyrant of a generous mind,
The coward's ill, who dares not meet his fate,
And ever-doubting to be fortunate,
Falls to the wretchedness his fears create.”

—*Olway.*

THEY reached London on the following day in the afternoon, but it was foggy and dark, and in the main thoroughfares gas was dimly burning. The toiling, moiling multitudes, the indefinite forms of great wagons and horses, the terrible noises and shrill human cries made a fearsome and depressing phantasma through which Lady Yarrow hurried the hired vehicle with promises of extra money.

She was too much under the influence of the discouraging situation to talk, and Scotia looked with wonder and fear into the gloomy, crowded streets. Ere long, however, they came to more open spaces, to squares and parks surrounded by large houses, and before one of the most remarkable the vehicle stopped. The house was well lighted, and had an air of

welcome and happiness, and a footman in the Yarrow plum-color-and-silver livery stood within the door, looking vacantly at their approach. He supposed the arrivals in a common cab to be new servants, and did not trouble himself, until Lady Yarrow spoke in that tone of authority all servants recognize.

"Ann must be here, and she is doubtless expecting us, or she would not have wasted fire and candle-light ;" and with the words, Ann, followed by a young woman, appeared. The young woman was Scotia's maid, and she took possession of the young lady, and at once conducted her to the suite arranged for her use. Ann said little, but there was a look between her and Lady Yarrow which said everything.

They went to Lady Yarrow's room hand in hand, and when they entered the fine chamber with its crimson silk hangings and upholstery, catching richer lights and deeper shadows from the glowing fire and the mellow radiance of wax candles, Lady Yarrow threw herself into a large chair, and sighed out with infinite pleasure :

"Oh, Ann! how good it is to get home again! And how good it is to see you! You have engaged a maid for Scotia I see—a good English girl, I hope?"

"I was very careful, and she understands her business well."

"That is right. A good maid is now necessary. Ann, what have you been doing ever since I saw you?"

Ann was making a cup of tea for Lady Yarrow, and as she placed the tray at her side, she answered, "I have been as busy as a bee ever since we parted. I have left everything in perfect order at Yarrow House.

If we dinna go back to Edinburgh for twa years or mair, naething will tak' hurt. The siller and a' the rare china and auld books are at the banker's. And after I cam' to London, there was plenty to do here, and all isna done yet by a great deal. You canna go into the market place and hire servants, as you go into a mercer's and call for the silk you want."

Then Ann went on explaining the necessities which had been attended to, and others which were still to be supplied ; and Lady Yarrow listened without any interest. Her heart was sick with anxiety. She wanted Ann to tell her voluntarily about her visit to Rodney Law ; every moment that the information was delayed she felt to be a wrong. And quite as a matter of course, without any preliminary, Ann at last said, "and between Yarrow House, and this house, I went to Rodney Law, and spent twa days wi' our son."

"Ann Bruce !"

"Just sae. You bade me go, and I thought it wad please you best, to hae the message delivered when you didna hae to be feeling and wondering anent it ; and to tell the even down truth, the wish cam' o'er me on Christmas night sae strang, that there wasna ony choice in the matter. I had to gae—or bide at hame wi' an aching heart. Sae I went. Dinna look sae dour and ill-pleased. I made nae mention o' your name."

"You ought to have made mention of it, Ann. Now the lad will be thinking of you by yourself, and never a thought for me."

"He is my lad."

"He is mine, as much as yours."

"I gave him life."

"Tut, tut! What is life worth without learning and breeding, without position and influence, friends and respect, even money and good clothing? I might give you silk for a dress, Ann, but if you have no needle and no thread, nor any way to make it, and must just wrap it round you as best you can, the silk would be little worth. The woman who helped you fashion it into a rich and becoming garment, would be your greatest benefactor, eh?"

"There is nae mother like the mother that bore us. I gave the lad life and love. It was all I had to give."

"I gave him love, and everything that has made life lovely, and honorable, and pleasant. He is as much mine as yours. What do you think of him?"

"He is my ain son, but I think he is the finest man that I, or any other, e'er put eyes on."

"What did he say when he found out you were his mother?"

"He took me at once into his heart, as a son should. I told him the whole truth—that I was a poor fisher girl, and his fayther a fisherman; and that I was selling herring in Edinburgh streets, when you met me. I told him about his fayther's and uncle's death, and he said he thanked God for such kindred! And when I minded him, that he had come oot o' the fishing boats to the pulpit, he minded me—that the apostle Peter and Scotland's ain Saint Andrew were casting their nets in the sea, when the Lord Christ gied them their call. And oh! he was that proud o' me, and that fond o' me. I must thank God for thae twa days, aboon a' the days o' my life!"

"Did he never ask after me? Did he say nothing about me?"

"He said a great deal about you. And he told me

about the letter you sent him through Mr. Noble. He was sair troubled because he couldna think as you thought. And he sought your name, but I didna tell him—wanting your authority for it.”

“What kind of a home has he?”

“He has nae hame—worth the name o’ hame. The manse is cauld and bare o’ comfort, and there’s nae beauty in it, nor yet near it. I wonder at thae Rodneyes : letting their minister bide in such want o’ all pleasant things.”

“Did you see the Rodneyes?”

“Deed did I. They are na much to see, except the Colonel, and the lassie that is wi’ you. Colonel Rodney is a gentleman, as good and kind as a man can be, wha is ta’en up wi’ his ain ailments; ane o’ those men, wha talks a deal o’ his ancestors; and whose Bible and Book o’ Heraldry lie close thegither.”

“What of my sister Dorinda?”

“Mrs. Rodney is a lady-like body, thinking a deal o’ her youngest daughter, and her is-to-be son-in-law—a muckle man; but muckleness isna manliness. I set little store by him, and little by the lassie either. They scarce spoke to me. They thought the warid was made for them.”

“It is a wonder they did not ask you where you lived, and who by, and such like questions.”

“If they had, I could hae told them I was from Edinburgh. But little they cared whar I came from, or wha I was. They were ceevil enough for the minister’s sake, but I dinna think they would ware ten minutes talk on me. I didna interest them. I was just a plain, common body.”

“You are the handsomest, most uncommon woman

I ever saw, Ann. Has my sister Dorinda any of her beauty left?"

"I never should hae thought that beauty—mair or less o' it—was in her keeping. She is now vera thin, and yellow as a duck's foot. And she has a fretfu' look, that keeps you in constant mind o' David's advice—to keep weel the door o' your lips."

"She was once very lovely, Ann. She had large, soft, brown eyes, and a round, innocent, baby face; and nice little ways that every one approved."

"She wad look like her youngest daughter, then. Your picture will do for the bride-elect, vera properly."

"Oh! Bertha is of that kind, is she? Let her stay away from me, then. I should think Dorinda was tugging at my life-strings again. Ann, we are going to have a very grand season. We must see that Scotia puts her right foot first, when she enters society. I think Captain Forres will be able to come for a short visit, and Scotia could make no match that would please me better. Why do you not speak, Ann?"

"My speech might not please you. Speaking comes by nature, silence by understanding. I have heard say——"

"I have heard say 'is half-a-lie, Ann."

"Vera well, and vera true. But if people dinna keep goats, and yet sell kids, can you help wondering whar they get them?"

"What do you mean, Ann?"

"If Captain Forres has nae great income, and yet has a vera great outgo, can you help wondering whar he gets the siller?"

"Ann, if you have heard aught against the man, remember that a little truth makes the whole black

lie pass. Captain Forres has, doubtless, faults, and people speak of every one's faults but their own."

"The world——"

"Even if we stand by the world's verdict, Ann, it is better for us to know a man for a sinner, than for God to know him for a hypocrite. But we need not differ on what is not here, Ann ;"—then with a sigh—"and uncertainty walks on both sides of us."

The next two weeks were two very busy weeks to Scotia. She was with *modistes*, and she was taking lessons in court ceremonies, and in the social laws which governed the society she was to enter. And it cannot be denied that she felt a great interest in these things. Her whole existence had been altered. That open-air intercourse with nature, which had been her fundamental pleasure, had been totally withdrawn. She saw nature now only in city parks ; she came no closer to her than the carriage drive permitted. And yet when she passed under some spreading tree, and the bare branches stretched themselves over her head, she felt a warm glow at her heart, and would have liked to draw one down, and put it to her lips. After all, trees have a strange link with humanity ; there are few who do not love them—who are not born foresters.

Every day as the season advanced the whirl of so-called pleasure grew more fast and furious. Scotia was presented, and found the ceremony a much less important affair than she had supposed.

She went to dinners and dances, to operas, and to Christie's. All the fashionable resorts of the time were familiar to her. And though her beauty did not make the reputation Lady Yarrow had confidently expected, yet she had many admirers ; and one or two lovers very much in earnest.

Her triumphs were all chronicled in the *Court Journal*, and they lost nothing through its flattering medium. Miss Rodney, it declared, was the belle of her exclusive circle. Her beauty was wonderful. Her grace beyond description. Her toilets, marvels. Her adorers, legion. And Lady Yarrow took pains to see the *Journal* found its way to Rodney House. It was not a messenger of pure peace and good-will. Bertha hated to see it on the table, and yet she read every word in it, especially those relating to her sister's gay life and social victories.

She also took care that Angus Bruce knew the story to its last tittle. It gave her a secretly malicious pleasure to read it aloud to him. Of course Scotia was credited with lovers beyond all reason or probability ; and the rumors of her engagement to Mr. Percy Vaux, or to the young Earl of Carrickfergus, toward the end of January, were nearly constant items of available torture. Many remarks in Scotia's letters could be separated from their contexts, and made apparently incontestable proofs ; and Bertha was not above such disloyal transmuting.

She was not in love with Angus Bruce—no ! she was sure that she was in love with Blair Rodney ; but this dog-in-the-manger greed of Bruce's admiration, was certainly, in Blair's absence, the most controlling motive of her life. And Angus suffered all and far more than she expected him to suffer. Indeed, his suffering would have been intolerable but for the new comfort of his mother's letters. He had been greatly disappointed in not seeing Scotia at the New Year. She had promised to come home for a few days at New Year, and she had not done so. He told himself that even then she had begun to forget. The doubt

kept him silent, and every day the doubt deepened. How could she remember him, among so many claimants for favor, and in the midst of a life so far apart from his?

One afternoon past the middle of February he was returning from Rodney House. He had gone there voluntarily to be tortured by Bertha. He knew that the *Journal* had arrived, and probably letters also, and that he would hear words sharper than swords, and yet he went to hear them.

"The *Journal* says that Scotia has a new pretender to her favor, Captain Forres, the son and heir of Lord Forres; but that is fiddler's news, Mr. Bruce. We all knew that, before Scotia left Edinburgh. He has simply followed her to London. I should think Scotia would decide on some one, and give other poor girls a chance. The season has been run for Scotia Rodney. Dear me! I wish I had such chances! I should make a little change in my destiny," and she sighed like a maiden driven astray by destiny.

"Your fate is chosen, Miss Bertha."

"Chosen for me, you mean? I really had no choice. I never was in society. And perhaps if I had been a girl without ancestors, I might have chosen more to my liking," and she looked at Angus with a sweet treachery that had an irresistible compliment in it.

He felt the blood rush to his heart and face, and he rose to go away; a consequence which greatly pleased Bertha. She laughed softly as she thought, "He felt what I implied. You might win a saint if you only pretended to be in love with him. I dare vow now, Angus Bruce thinks I am in love with him, and that I regret my engagement to Blair. Perhaps I am—perhaps I do. Who knows?"

She put her little feet upon the fender and lifted her ever-ready bit of embroidery, and set her stitches to an accompaniment of sly smiles, and almost imperceptible nods. She was giving assent to her thoughts, whatever they were.

Angus walked home in a very miserable mood. He began to think seriously of resigning his charge, and then in the midst of such a resolution, suddenly drew a circle round his thoughts, and adjured them to a nobler will. "Rather he would stay and combat whatever disappointment or temptation came to him." Bertha had an oblique, evasive soul that slipped away from any firm interrogatory. He would bring her to fair question and straight answer for the future, and not permit her to drop ill-omened words into his life, as she might drop ink into fair water.

As for Scotia, he could not bear to accuse her of disloyalty to him and to her own heart ; and yet he did not dare to fully exonerate her in the face of such contrary evidence. He hoped—but he knew that hopes are like bits of stained glass, which let nothing be seen in a true light through them. He could not trust. Ah me ! The worst wounds are those our own hands inflict. He was chilled by the wet ground and the dripping, bare branches, and the creeping fog, and he felt sorrow stealing over his life like the fog. It benumbed him. He longed rather for one pang of conflict.

As he opened the garden gate the postman gave him a letter. It was a little bulky, as if it contained something besides paper. There was a kind of luxury in postponing his curiosity, until he had removed his coat, and stirred up the fire, and made himself comfortable. He opened it with simple curiosity, and it

filled him with a thousand charming hopes. Yet there was not one written word, only a few flowers arranged with evident purpose and method. The paper had the Rodney crest on it; the postmark was London. It was from Scotia. He had no doubt of it. Her fingers had arranged the leaves and flowers. Had she purposely chosen the paper, or was it an oversight? Then he remembered that valentine day had just passed. Bertha had showed him one, sent to her from Blair; an elaborate arrangement of lace, paper, ribbons, and painted flowers. He had rather disapproved of valentines then; had said something about their pagan origin, etc., etc.

Now he had a valentine also. And from Scotia! Love can find so many good excuses that he felt a strange tenderness for the foolish little pagan messenger. He wondered what the flowers meant. He knew they had a language, but among all his books there was not one which could define a speech so sweet, so vague, so occult. No youth in his teens was ever more excited over his first love-letter, than Angus Bruce was over those few, faded eloquent flowers. Oh, if he only knew their language.

The craving for this knowledge became so intense that he resolved to gratify it. It might prove to be a message with certainty sufficient to put an end to his miserable suspense. After the next Sabbath Day he went to Edinburgh. He had other duties and interests there, but to buy a book about flowers was the business that interested him most of all. So to prove to himself that his will had the mastery, he did not enter a book store until he had attended to every other claim upon his time and sympathy. At last, in St. Mary's Street, he saw a shop he thought likely to deal in

such literature. The windows were yet adorned with valentines, and there were volumes of poetry displayed there—Burns, Scott, Wordsworth, and Byron.

A grave old man stood behind the counter. Bruce examined first a copy of Burns's poems, and then with shame and hesitation he asked for the book he wished. He fancied the old man looked astonished and disapproving, and he said, "Choose such a copy for me as you think likely to please a young lady. I know nothing of such books."

The bookseller gave him a thin, gay-looking volume, and he paid half-a-crown and went out of the shop. He scarcely knew how or where. His conscience was lashing him with a three-fold whip. He had lied. He had made a false accusation. He had regarded his own honor and gratification before the honor of God and his ministry. What a contemptible creature he was! It took him but a few moments to see this, and he said in a dour, angry voice, "Go back, Angus Bruce, and do the thing you ought to do."

He went back. His firm, intentional steps rung out clear on the stone pavement. When he re-entered the shop, the man was still standing where he had left him. The books which he had been examining, were still on the corner—so swift had been his conscience, so swift his own answer to its accusation.

"Sir!" he said, "take back your book. It was for no young lady. It was for my own satisfaction I bought it. I lied to you."

The bookseller looked at him with a kindling face. He laid the piece of money down before Angus, and as he took the returned book, said "I thank God that I hae lived long enough to see a young man wi' sae tender a conscience! Tak' your siller, sir."

Bruce was at the door. He turned and shook his head. "Give it to the first beggar lad you see. I will have neither the book nor the price of it."

This incident affected Angus in a manner which our easy-principled and self-excusing generation can hardly estimate. For some days his remorseful sorrow drove him into solitude. He compelled himself to put the poor faded flowers out of his sight and touch. He would not permit his thoughts one moment with the woman for whose dear sake he had offended. He was terribly harsh and strict with himself in every point which touched his earthly delight, or even his earthly comfort. And this severity was the natural result of his temperament and education ; for in Angus Bruce the spiritual life was the supreme life, constantly welling up from the inscrutable depths in which his being had its root. Yea, in all fine natures is not this the rule, evermore inward to outward ?

The first result of this spiritual tenderness was, alas ! one of exaggerated jealousy for the honor of everything connected with his office. One night he was urged, with all a mother's passionate fear and love for her dying child, to "hasten ! hasten !" to its cradle. He looked at the signature to the note, put his hand to his brow, and with a sorrowful face shook his head. But the bearer of it, being also urgent with him, he permitted himself to be driven at a rapid pace to a house three miles away. A beautiful young woman, in a state of distraction, came to the door to meet him. She did not permit him to remove his coat, she cried only, "Make haste ! You may be too late ! All is ready ! Come, sir. Come, for God's sake !"

Her impetuosity carried him with her into a richly decorated parlor, showing all the sad disorder which accompanies sudden and fatal sickness. In a cradle lay a dying child. Many servants and two physicians stood around. The father knelt by the little bed, and had the babe on his arm. He was a man of wealth, of great political power; a man also of dissolute character, who had despised the holy tie of marriage, and who scoffed at all church ordinances.

He looked angrily at Bruce, and pointed to the Bible and the bowl of clean water. Bruce stood silent and motionless. The mother put the bowl into his hand. He replaced it on the table, and turning to the sinning parents, said sternly :

"The grace of baptism is only for the children of grace."

Then the mother threw herself, in a passion of grief, at his feet, crying :

"I will sin no more ! I will sin no more ! For Christ's sake, baptize my child !"

The weeping woman, the eager promise, went to his heart. He lifted her from the ground, and, looking at the father, said :

"Glenstrey, you hear this woman's promise ? Stand up and join her in it. Give me your word to live righteously, to obey God's word and honor His ordinances, then I will marry you and baptize your child. Great is his mercy ! I believe he will not reject the little one offered with repenting hearts."

He spoke as one having authority, but Glenstrey answered angrily : "Sir I sent for you to baptize a dying child, not to make a marriage. Lavinia, what folly to ask pity of a priest ? The boy is dead, gone to the pity of God—if there be a God. Doctor, give

me your arm," and leaning heavily on it he went out of the room, dazed and distracted with grief, but heart-hardened by his calamity.

The mother stepped hastily to the cradle, she lifted the dead child in her arms, and turned to Bruce, holding out the fair piece of clay to him :

"You have worse than slain him!" she cried in an anguish. "You have worse than slain him! Recreant priest of a cruel God, why did you never come here and warn me? I have lived in your sight and your hearing, and you believed me to be bringing babes into the world for death and hell! How durst you eat your food, and lie down and sleep, knowing my boy—my little boy was in such danger? If you had seen him in peril of fire, or water, or pest, you would have tried to save him, but to save him from eternal death you would not say a word or move a finger. It is your fault! It is your fault! You never once warned me! I will so accuse you at the bar of the Eternal God!"

Her splendid beauty was inflamed with the passion of a pythoness. Her words were like coals of fire. She held out the still, cold babe toward him as a visible accuser. But her reproaches moved Bruce no more than the eternal rock is moved by the billow-bluster at its foot. Certainly, his eyes shone with pity for her agony, but he answered her thus:

"Lavinia Tenant, your father warned you. Your mother warned you. The pious, humble men and women, with whom you spent so many years, warned you. You knew the truth from your childhood. Every Sabbath day you have been warned, and called by the kirk bell. The ostracism of your neighbors has continually told you of your sin. I know that God has

warned you every day, and I doubt not in dreams of the night. It is your own fault, your own fault, Lavinia Tenant. Yet listen to me. If even now you turn to the Lord with all your heart, your sins, though they be as scarlet, shall be white as snow."

"Will that save my little child? Go away, sir! Go from my presence!"

She had begun to walk up and down the room with the dead boy clasped to her breast. She was uttering over him inarticulate cries of agony and remorse. A physician who was still present gave some instructions to the terrified servants, and then taking Bruce's arm, said, "We can neither of us do any more good here now, minister. Let us go."

This circumstance troubled Bruce to the very bottom of his heart and soul. He felt that he had no right—even had he been alone—to allow the despairing mother to throw her sin on to his shoulders; but in addition to this cause, others also had been present, whose all future might be influenced by that sad scene. She had refused the Sin-bearer; then she must carry the burden herself. For many good reasons he had felt constrained to let her feel this; and yet—and yet, there was a strong mingling of pity in all his reflections on the subject—perhaps, also, a vague feeling of reproach. Perhaps he ought to have personally warned her. The thought tortured him; he felt, as he had never done before, the terrible responsibility which he had assumed with his office.

The Colonel and Mrs. Rodney wondered at his long absence from their house, and they wondered still more when he partly explained it by an allusion to the spiritual stress and anxiety arising from the death of the child. The Colonel was reading *Antigone*, and

had his finger between the leaves of the famous chorus. He felt little interest in the subject.

"Glenstrey ought to have considered the possibility. It is not your fault, Mr. Bruce," he said. "You are not the Sin-bearer of the community. After all, this Calvinistic creed holds the conscience in a constant bit and bridle. In reading my favorite Greek authors, I am continually struck with the gentle and beautiful conceptions they had of the divinity."

"Yes, sir," replied Bruce, "'the gods that live at ease' are very different beings from the ELOAH! the 'mighty and dreadful one' of the Semitic race."

"And how much more exquisite is the Greek literature—I speak of it merely as literature. How beautiful, for instance, are these idyls of Theocritus! Taken simply as pastoral poems, there is nothing comparable to them in the Hebrew. Listen :

Sweet is the music, O goatherd, of yon whispering pine to the fountains ; and sweetly, too, is thine breathed from thy pipe !

and again :

Here are oaks, here is the galingale, here are bees sweetly humming around their hives. Here are two springs of coolest water, here birds warble in the trees . . . and the pine showers its cones from on high.

Are not these sweet songs ? "

"Very sweet, indeed," answered Bruce. "But let me tell you, even in a pastoral poem, the Greek literature is far behind the Hebrew. Listen to me now. Listen to the exquisite song of the women as they stand round the fountain, waiting their turn to draw :

Spring up, O well ! Sing ye to it !
Well, that the princes digged,
The nobles of the people bored,
With the scepter and with their staves !

You have but to read the few lines, and see the desert and the guarded well, and the waiting flocks, and the singing women ; women grand enough to be the mothers of Abraham's countless seed. Hebrew maidens, straight as pine trees, with soft, large Syrian eyes, saluting the living waters that flow forth to their song. Spring up, O well ! Spring up ! Sing ye to it ! ”

“ I never yet discovered that exquisite song. Where can I find it ? ”

“ Hidden away in the Book of Numbers. I do not know the chapter and verse, but you may well search the whole book for it. Oh, the Bible has its lyrics, as well as its laws ! they are both perfect. Do you want a harvest song ? I will match Theocritus with Hosea.

In that day, saith Jehovah, I will answer,
I will answer the heavens,
And they shall answer the earth,
And the earth shall answer the corn,
And the wine, and the oil,
And they shall hear Jezreel.
And I will have mercy upon her,
Which had not obtained mercy ;
And I will say unto them—
‘ Thou art my people ! ’
And they shall say,
‘ Thou art my God ! ’

Or do you wish an elegy ? Tell me to what literature shall we turn for an equal to the sublime peace of this old Hebrew dirge :

There the wicked cease from troubling,
And the weary are at rest ;
There the prisoners are at rest together ;
They hear not the taskmaster's voice.
Small and great are there the same.
And the servant is free from his master.”

But though the Colonel laid down his book, and listened with delight to Bruce's fine recitation of the exquisite passages, Bruce was not interested. This was not the discussion he wanted. He had come to his friend for a conversation entirely different, and his friend was not inclined for it. He went back home disappointed.

If a man is fighting sickness, calumny, bankruptcy, it is a visible struggle, and we are generally ready to give some sort of sympathy, but spiritual conflicts are beyond our ken. We cannot pity what we do not see nor possibly understand. The Colonel was politely bored at the first mention of conscientious doubts and scruples. He considered them a case for God's audience chamber, and why did not Mr. Bruce go there with them?

"I think the minister is righteous overmuch, Dorinda," the Colonel said, "and why did he mention Glenstrey's domestic affairs? They are ignored by the whole neighborhood. It was bad taste, I think."

Now, this is the way of doubt of any kind; it makes a lonely pain and weariness, which nothing but some brave deed of decision can dissipate. Suddenly there came into Bruce's heart a determination to go and see Scotia, and learn from her own lips the measure of love she had for him. He told himself that he ought to make known to her his parentage. It might influence her very much. If she declined to marry the son of fisher parents, he might as well get rid of a false hope at once. She was in London, and his mother was in London. The latter was well acquainted with fashionable society and its ways. She would be able to give him Scotia's address, and advise him as to the best hour for an interview with

her. He longed also for some heart near to his own, that he could pour out to, all his hopes and fears, and be comforted. His new-found mother, with her strong, tender face, was an irresistible idea to him. He took it at once into favor; he wondered he had not thought of it before. j

"It came by chance, when I was thinking of something very different," he said, and then he instantly corrected himself; "there is no chance. Everything—thought, word, or deed—is but a link in a chain."

He fulfilled with a supersensitive care the last tittle of duty likely to be demanded of him, and when the Sabbath services were over, and Monday morning had broken, he left for London. He told no one of his intention. He very often visited Edinburgh for a few days at a time; he did not propose to be longer away than he had been before. But it was Tuesday afternoon when he reached the great city. Heavy snows in the Border district had delayed the train, and he was weary and cold, and woefully depressed, when he stepped into a cab and gave his mother's address to the driver. "I shall see mother soon," he whispered; and then he dozed until the vehicle stopped. He put down the window and looked out. Through the dusk and drizzle he saw a large house, well lighted. The number was over the door, the name of the street on the lamp—there could be no mistake. He sent the cab away, and slowly mounted the steps. There was a large fire in the hall, and a servant in livery sitting before it, reading a newspaper.

Bruce's demand for entrance disturbed him. He came leisurely to answer it. When he saw no carriage he walked back to a table and laid down his paper. Then he threw open the door with an inquisitive stare

and silence that made Bruce burn with anger. He had come from a country where the garb of a minister was a passport to respect.

"I wish to see Mrs. Ann Bruce," he said with a lofty air, and the man instantly altered his behavior. He took Bruce into a large room furnished with the utmost magnificence, but whose use for the day was probably believed to be over, for the fire was dying out, and the gas unlit.

"Your name, sir?"

He took the card offered him, and went upstairs muttering:

"Rev. Angus Bruce! Well, I never!"

XII.

A FORTUNATE JOURNEY.

"Not by appointment do we meet delight
And joy ; they heed not our expectancy ;
But round some corner in the streets of life,
They on a sudden meet and clasp us with a smile."

"Marriage, and death, and division,
Make barren our lives."

THE mere "gummidging" of selfish pessimism never brings help or practical relief in trouble, and Angus was sure, in spite of his weariness and uncertainty, that he had done right to face his doubts and fears, and so resolve them. With the calmness of decision he waited, scarcely noting anything around him except the general air of wealth and tasteful magnificence. Perhaps he was conscious also of a vague fear lest his unexpected presence should prove embarrassing to his mother.

But if so, he had scarcely time to be unhappy about it, for in a very few minutes she appeared. He was standing on the hearth when the door opened, and he turned around and looked eagerly at the advancing woman. Her face was full of love and light. She came toward him with her hands outstretched, and before he was conscious of his own movement he had clasped her to his heart.

"How handsome you are, mother !" was his first

commonplace remark, and he held her at arm's length and let his gaze take in the strong, noble face and ample, yet not ungraceful form, fitly clothed in flowing silk. "How handsome you are! I am very proud of you."

"When did you come to London, my dear lad?"

"I have just arrived."

"And you are tired, and sleepy, and hungry?"

"Just so."

She touched a bell, and it was promptly answered. "Park, take Mr. Bruce's valise into No. 2. See that the fire is good. Tell Gibson to carry there a pot of tea and some cold game and whatever is necessary for Mr. Bruce's refreshment." Then turning to Bruce, "I'll hear naething, and I'll say naething at this hour, Angus. You'll go and get yoursel' warmed, and fed, and rested, and then you'll put on the vera best o' your claithees and the finest o' your linen, and we twa will hae dinner thegither—we twa by oursel—*for my Lady goes to Lord Gowrie's to dinner, and then you sall tell me a' that is in your heart, dear lad, and I will gie you whate'er comfort and help I can gie.*"

She was taking him upstairs as she spoke, and in a few minutes he found himself alone in a handsome little parlor, the ante-room to a fine chamber, whose luxurious bed was almost overpoweringly inviting. But he was also hungry, and the tinkle of the glass and china, the refreshing odor of the tea, the cold game and pastry were equally tempting. He washed and ate and then slept as he had not done for many weeks—a deep, dreamless slumber, which filled him with a sense of rest from head to feet. He slept for hours; it seemed to him as if it must be morning when he opened his eyes.

His mother, with a lighted wax candle in her hand stood at his side. She had been watching him asleep for some moments, and she had felt how different was this face from the face of babyhood and boyhood. For when men sleep the soul comes to their face, as the water lily to the surface ; and she saw its love and sorrow, its hope and fear, written upon the pallor of those white features.

He opened his eyes and caught the love in hers, and he knew her instantly. He was sure he would have known her, even if there had been no word of explanation between them. She stooped and kissed him, and said : " Rise now, Angus, and dress yourself with your utmost care. We hae to think o' the servants, laddie ; and for my sake, you must hold yourself to your topmost bent and place."

" I will do whatever you wish, mother. What time is it ? Have I slept long ?"

" A matter o' four hours. My lady is gane, and willna be back till after midnight. Dinner will be ready in twenty minutes, and I'll come back here for you. You sall tak' your ain mother on your arm first ; there's nane here that hae mair than my right."

He pondered her words as he dressed, but could make nothing of them ; and he was proud and happy indeed to feel her on his arm as they passed slowly down the grand stairway. The dinner was a very fine one, and was served with the utmost nicety and care. They two alone partook of it. When it was over they went to a small parlor in the rear of the dining-room. Here Ann brought her knitting, and Angus sat down by her side.

She asked him no direct question, and yet he felt her sympathy so kind and kindling that he had no

hesitation in opening all his heart to her. He told her everything—how his love for Scotia began, and how it had been trammelled and controlled by the Colonel's confidence in him. "She loves me, mother, I know; or, at least, she did love me; and I have heard nothing from her directly since she went to Lady Yarrow, except"—then with reddening cheeks he confessed all about the valentine, his longing, his sin, and his remorse for his sin.

"So you see, mother, I have been tossed about like a rudderless boat, and at last it came into my heart to 'go to mother.' I thought 'no one can do wrong in seeking a good mother's advice,' and this is why you find me here to-night."

"My dear one, you have done right. Sae the lassie loves you?"

"Indeed, I believe she does. And I do want to see her. Do you think I may call upon her? Can you tell me where Lady Yarrow lives? What hour of the day will be best to call?"

There was a happy smile on Ann's face, as she answered: "Naething is likely to prevent you seeing her. I'll tak' vera gude care you do see her. And I dinna doubt but what a happy hour will come your way. My dear lad, what gude lassie wouldna love you? She is little to be blamed for it. You ken I saw [her sister, when I was at Rodney House wi' you?"

"Bertha? Oh, Bertha is nothing like Scotia!"

"I'm gay glad o' that. I didna fall in love wi' Bertha Rodney, onyway. And I'm weel pleased you werna ta'en captive wi' her blinking black e'en. She had vera sweet words and ways, but I didna trust them; and sae I didna like them."

Then Angus found his opportunity to describe the beauty and charm of the beloved Scotia. His language was so vivid and he set the girl so clearly before them, that Ann said : " Man ! when did you see her last ? Surely you were dreaming before dinner o' that tall, fair girl in the shiny white satin dress ? "

" Oh mother ! if I could only see her again for five minutes I should be happy. Just five minutes, in which she should tell me truly if she loves me yet and will be my wife. "

" Weel, weel Angus, bide ye yet, and bide ye yet
Ye never ken what will betide ye yet,
This bonnie sweet lassie may fa' to your lot,
Sae just be canty wi' thinking o' 't. "

In such conversation, with its side issues of the Rodneys and the Free Kirk, time sped very rapidly. The clock struck one. It was another day. Angus spoke of it with anxiety. " I have but a short time in London, " he said. " I must try and see her to-day. Mother, whose house is this ? I have not asked you before, because I thought every time you spoke you would tell me. But I ought to know, do you not think so ? "

" Yes, I do ; but I am thinking, likewise, that my lady willna be pleased to hae me tak' the words out o' her lips. I shall tell her as soon as she comes hame that you are here, and it's no unlikely she'll send at once for you. I thoct o' this likelihood, when I said, ' put on the best in your keeping ' . "

As she was speaking, a carriage drove rapidly to the door, and there was the silent stir which is usually all that accompanies a return from an entertainment. A few sharp words to the sleepy porter—the clashing of the main doors—the slipping of the big bolts—and

the rustle of trailing garments on the polished oak steps, announced that the seekers of pleasure had come back—probably disappointed.

“Wait here a few moments, Angus. I’ll be back, or I’ll send a messenger to you, before you’ll hae time to weary. If I dinna gae to her ladyship, she’ll think her warld is tapsalterie ; and she’ll be speiring of all and sundry if I’m drown’d, or dead, or gane to the warld’s end. And thae will hae mair than is true or needfu’ to tell her anent yoursel’.”

She went hastily out, and Bruce stood up and let the strangeness of all the pleasant surroundings sink into his heart. His eyes were dropped upon the fire, his hands clasped behind him, a faint smile—the smile of inward trust and hope—lighted the warm pallor of his handsome face.

The door moved softly on its hinges. A sweet, subtile perfume—a still sweeter and more subtile personality, touched him with an instantaneous and supernatural significance. He turned to the door as one spoken to by a spirit—and then, he was at Scotia’s side, he held her in his arms, he was whispering against her cheek, over, and over, and over, the dear delicious dissyllable “Scotia ! Scotia ! Scotia !”

And oh, how lovely she was ! Her white, glistening robes, her white arms and bosom glistening with gems, her long cloak of white cashmere trimmed with swan’s down, falling from and partly hiding her beauty and splendor, seemed to Angus only part and portion of her altogether charming personality—the proper adjuncts of her glorious hair, her shining eyes, and her radiant face.

For a little while his whole being was entranced by her presence ; he forgot all that was strange and un-

likely in the far greater wonder of seeing her, speaking to her, clasping her in his arms ; in the joyful miracle of hearing her call him "dearest" and "Angus," and feeling her hands in his hands and her cheek against his cheek.

But such divine moments find nothing in our humanity on which they can rest ; they enfold us in their fleet passage, and are gone. With a happy sigh Angus remembered first. He led Scotia to a seat, and stood beside her chair. It was such a delight to bend down to her sweet lifted face ; the touch of her hand charmed him ; the faint scent of woodruff filled the chambers of his brain with delicate impressions of forests, and mossy coverts, and tinkling springs ; and yet all these impressions were in some way part of Scotia. They talked softly with eloquent ellipses and shy glances—they found words useless, and filled silence with long looks of love, and smiles, and kisses.

There was no need to ask Scotia any questions—no need to tell her of his fears and doubts. They had gone, he knew not where : only it seemed the vainest of things to remember they had once been. Ann left them nearly an hour together. They thought it was five minutes. They were just beginning to remember that they were not alone in the world ; just beginning to wonder and speculate, when she came into the room. Angus went to meet her. He brought her to Scotia ; he said, "Mother, this dear woman is to be my wife. Love her for my sake."

She put her hands on Scotia's shoulders and kissed her ; and then turning to Angus, said :

"Dinna think I hae the lesson to learn, Angus. The lassie kens weel that I love her for her ain sake."

And for a few minutes they stood together, and

Scotia called her mother. The dear word went to her heart with a little shock. Perhaps, in spite of her love for Angus, she was not quite happy. She had just found him, and already she must share his affection with others. It takes a good deal of the love of God in the heart to suddenly give a mother's love to the strange woman who takes the first place in an only son's life. Will her love indeed atone for all she is to lose? The poor mother! She must rejoice, though her heart ache. It is so natural for the young to love and to wish to marry. True! It is also so natural for the mother to cling to the son she loved before the girl-wife was born. The girl has loved him a year. The mother has loved him twenty-six years; yea, and she loved his father before him.

Ann did not consciously think of these things; she was only sensible of their effect, and that very dimly. Her love for her boy had always been fettered and shared. It was no new grief that came to her. But her presence brought the lovers down to a more practical and inquisitive level.

"Then I am in Lady Yarrow's London house?" said Angus.

"And you are the mother of Angus?" said Scotia. "I ought to have known it. How glad I am! And has my Aunt Yarrow always known Angus?"

"Since he was a bairn seven months auld she has kent him; but I'll answer nae questions this night—or morning. For I'm vera weary, and the baith o' you the same, dootless—or aught to be. Angus is at hame here, and Lady Yarrow bade me tell him sae. Sleep now, bairns, there's all the to-morrows of life before you."

It was long after the noon hour when Lady Yarrow

sent for Angus. "You will send him here to me, Ann," she said positively, "and he must come alone. You went to Rodney Law alone, and had the lad all to yourself. I am going, likewise, to have him all to myself. First impressions are weighty, and I will not have you meddle with my first impressions on our son."

So Angus was led by a footman into Lady Yarrow's presence. She had made Ann dress her with extraordinary care ; she was seated in a richly carved high-backed chair that had some resemblance to a throne ; she assumed an air of dignity and authority. Her idea was, to first fill the imagination of Angus with a sense of her lofty station and character, and then absolutely unbend to his claim upon her. She thought he would value her affection more if he realized the social distance between them.

But Angus had been trained in the opinion that the office of a minister of Christ was the most exalted condition on earth. And there was a total absence of the servile in his nature, for he came of generations of fishers, who had called no man 'Master' but God Almighty ; men who asked no favor but fair winds and a smooth sea, and who went to Heaven for that favor. The sense of dependence also had never galled Angus. He had always supposed that his unknown benefactor had, in some way or other, the right to care for him. He had grown up under the favorable influence of financial independence and patrician dreams, and his mother's revelation of the true story of his life had come too late to modify his physical bearing or his mental attitude.

It was, however, a trying ordeal, and he felt it to be so. No matter how he carried himself through it he

thought it likely he would offend his patron's ideals. For his intercourse with life having been mainly through ministers and schoolmen, he had little knowledge of fine ladies, and was obliged to form his conceptions of them from Mrs. Rodney and the few families whom he had met at Rodney House. It did not occur to him there was any other type, and when he first glanced at Lady Yarrow he supposed his preconceived ideas to be correct. She sat still, and permitted him to approach her chair without a word or sign; she felt during those moments that she was making her impression.

But a woman so impulsive could not be held even by her own determinations. When Angus was close to her, when she felt the influence of his great physical beauty, and caught the shining glance from his eyes, she abandoned all her fine plans; she rose quickly, stretched out her hand, and said with emotion:

"Angus, my dear lad! I am glad to see you! Tut, tut! do not kiss my hand; that is but a cold greeting"; and when, without more ado, he kissed her cheek, she blushed with pleasure at his "world-like pith and sense."

"We will say nothing of the past, Angus."

"But I must thank you, Lady Yarrow——"

"Call me 'mother,' young man, if you wish to please me. No mother could have loved you better, or watched you with more care than I have done. I called you 'son' when you were but a bairn a few months old."

"My dear mother, I am very grateful to you."

"Yet, when I wrote to you anent the kirk——"

"That was a case of conscience, not of love or gratitude."

"And how do you feel on the subject now?"

"If the State does not do what is right——"

"Hear to the lad, judging great lawyers and statesmen! As if he knew better than both houses of Parliament."

"The wrong-doing of the State is so obvious that every shepherd and hind on the hills can see it. At the next May Assembly, I think nine-tenths of the Scotch clergy will leave their kirks and their manses, and I shall be among them. For a bite and a sup, would you have me give God's honor to Cæsar?"

"I would think little of you if you did. Go out with your brethren; if you do not, I shall be ashamed of you."

"Yet Mr. Noble——"

"Mr. Noble set a snare for you—you were over true and wise to fall into it."

"Mother, had you any right to——"

"Yes, Angus, I had a right. I know my rights, every one of them. I am not likely to go beyond them. One of them was to give you, yourself—placed minister though you be—any good opportunity that came to hand to find out your own heart—a knowledge beyond anything to be learned in the schools."

"In that you are right, mother. And I am glad your heart is with the kirk and your own country."

"I am not daft either way, Angus. If I were English-born I should be for the Episcopal, no doubt. I should have come into the world with a bias that way, and I should call it 'conscience.' Being a McDonald, I am not inclined to let Episcopal put a finger on Scotland's Ark of the Covenant—though, between

you and myself, I am not planted for time and eternity on Presbyterianism."

"The faith of Scotland——"

"Tut! It came from Geneva. In the way of creeds, it is a thing of yesterday. If I were standing on a creed, I would away to what you call 'Babylon.'"

"John Knox——"

"Was not an angel from heaven nor a prophet, nor yet the son of a prophet."

"He was an apostle, and in iron times God sends iron apostles to make smooth His way. We sit at ease because he sowed in blood and fire, and then we call him harsh, and sour, and stern. He was not stern enough."

She smiled proudly. "I dare say you would have been sterner. I am glad you can talk back. My life would be happy enough if it was not so monotonous, and it is a pleasure to discover a young gentleman—young he is sure to be—who thinks differently from his neighbors."

"When it comes to my creed——"

"And to mine! And to everybody's, let us be very tolerant. Until God make of one flesh all the families of the earth, we shall have different creeds, as we have different temperaments and different climates. Episcopacy suits these luxurious conservative Englishmen. It gives them ready-made prayers, and makes them doubly dear and holy by the very fact that they have been said, over and over, for hundreds of years. Antiquity, here, is a kind of religion."

"In the matter of Kirk and State, there is not a weaver, or shepherd, or fisher, who does not know both sides of the argument from beginning to end."

"Scotch weavers, and fishers, and shepherds, are not

fed on plum pudding and roast beef, and their oatmeal and fish diet fills their restless brains with phosphorus. All of them have that mere faculty of logic which belongs to lawyers and men educated at Edinburgh ; and they would not thank you for a creed that was not full of difficulties. What they really enjoy is a good think over what is unthinkable to ordinary Englishmen. Angus, my dear lad, God is more than all the shrines that hold him ; and the wisest of creeds is but a childish effort to spell the Infinite."

"But we must have creeds ; we must define what we believe."

"Yes, as we must have laws to define what is right and wrong. Blessed are they who have the law of God in their heart, and who serve Him, being under bondage to no other law or creed ! Come, come, we will not sour the milk of human kindness with differing about dogmas."

"When we talk of God, words are so terribly inadequate."

"Yet, he who is so vast and strange

When with intellect we gaze,
Close to our heart steals in, in a thousand tender ways.

We can love, even when we do not know. Surely you loved me, through all the years I cared for you, though you did not know me."

"I loved always. I wondered very often. I longed for a revelation which would give me something real to cling to."

"Be very grateful to me, Angus, that I gave you something to wonder about, all through your growing years. Imagination and wonder are the creative faculties. How much of your intellect do you owe to

wonder? Happy were the children who lived when all the marvelous fountains were not dried up."

"They are not yet dried up. Africa is still a wonderland!"

"No. It is full of deserts, and we know all about sand, and sand-storms, and camels."

"We may discover new tribes of black men."

"We may hope to be spared that discovery. As for Persians, Turks, Arabians, we know them better than my father knew the Shetlanders, or the Americans. Cairo and Damascus used to be the home of the genii and the fairies; they are as commonplace as Paris now. So be grateful that I gave you something to wonder about all through your childhood."

"But why did you do it?"

"Why? Why? A Scot is born with a question all ready to ask. I will answer you in a question. If you had known you were Lady Yarrow's adopted son; if you had known that you were really the son of poor fishers, before you had the sense of a man, tell me what influence this knowledge would have had upon your unformed judgment, and your childish, immature passions? O, man, sit down and think over all the temptations I saved you from, and be grateful for all the healthy stimulants to study, and economy, and self-reliance I gave you."

"You were a wise mother."

"I was, Angus. Love your ain mother, for I know she went weeping to sleep many a night for the longing she had for you; but love me also, for I thought not of you as a bonnie lad to pet and play with; I thought for your future. I planned for you the grandest of careers. I have not only loved you well, but wisely."

She rose as she spoke, and her large, expressive face was full of feeling. "Give me your arm and take me down to my niece. You know Miss Rodney, of course."

"Yes."

"You know her well?"

"Very well; she is a girl of sweet nature, joyous, ardent, lovely, hopeful!"

"Gently. You had better not praise her. We learn to love what we praise."

"And?"

"You must not love Scotia Rodney. I have found a mate for her, a young man exactly suitable. Why do you smile? That is not good manners, sir."

"I smile because Colonel Rodney said nearly the same thing to me—'Do not fall in love with either of my daughters. I wish Blair Rodney to have the choice of them.' I have now been twice warned off Miss Rodney. It is enough to make me trespass."

"Colonel Rodney was impertinent. How did he know you wished to marry either of his daughters? And if you did, a minister of the Kirk, and Lady Yarrow's adopted son, was mate high enough for any Rodney. If I had not made already a match between Captain Forres and Scotia, I would—well, I would please myself another way."

"You have made that match, mother?"

"I have settled the money matters anent it with Lord Forres; and the young things will buckle to, when they get ready. They know I have set my heart upon it. Well, Ann, what are you wandering upstairs and downstairs for? Here is our braw son. What do you think of him?"

Two days of perfect happiness followed this meet-

ing. The weather was wonderfully fine, and Angus drove in the Park with Scotia and Lady Yarrow, who delighted herself with the astonishment and curiosity his appearance caused. On the second evening there was a small dinner in his honor, and after it they sat together till long past midnight, enjoying the charms of a thoroughly confidential and sympathetic conversation. As they thus sat, Scotia took from her pocket a letter which had arrived at dusk.

"It is from Bertha," she said ; "and what does she mean, Mr. Bruce, by this remark : 'The minister is from home ; and when he returns he will be shocked to hear that the mother of the child he refused to baptize has disappeared. No one knows where she has gone. Some say she has thrown herself into the sea. I should think the minister would feel like a murderer.'"

"I feel nothing like a murderer ;" answered Angus. "The woman is not dead. She has gone away to lead a better life. I shall not reveal her secret. As for her child, I was not to blame. The Kirk makes the parents the sponsors, and they must be free from vice and live in observance of her ordinances."

"Poor mother !" said Lady Yarrow angrily. "I dare say she is breaking her heart for a grisly spiritual chimera. If God requires holiness before he admits to heaven, surely he requires sin before he dooms to hell. The babe had never sinned."

"An infant dying unbaptized retains the burden of its original sin, and falls into eternal condemnation. Augustine saw unbaptized infants crying—'Without hope, we live in desire of seeing God?'"

"Angus, I will hear no such words. Christ took the little children on his knee and blessed them. He

asked nothing about their parents. He said nothing about Adam's sin."

"Wait a wee, my lady. When Angus has sons and daughters o' his ain he will think differently. It is the vera young men wha are the fierce Calvinists. I have aye noticed that. They get sweeter as they grow aulder. There was Minister Logan, wha sae bitter as he was on the doctrine o' election? I can mind yet, how angry you were wi' him, for saying, 'God chose men irrespective o' their actions, and predestined them for eternal salvation;' and how much mair than angry you were when he added, 'yea, my Lady, and ye shall hae the ither half o' the doctrine—God refuses men irrespective o' their actions, and predestinated them to eternal damnation.' Weel, Logan has had twenty years growth since that day. I heard him last Sabbath, and he put it thus—'A good man may say, God chose me, and I am persuaded he will keep me unto the end.'"

"That is all right, Ann. It is the expression of Christian hope, the very temper of Scripture."

"And of Calvinism;" added Angus with a smile, as he bent forward and took Lady Yarrow's hand.

So they sat for many hours, finding in such conversation a never wearying fascination; and then, very soon after the break of day, Angus left London for Scotland. Scotia and Ann had hardly slept, and they were up to take an early breakfast with him; and it was their bending faces, full of love and smiles, that he saw last, as he drove away from the house which he had entered with such a heavy heart, and which he left full of the hope and courage that springs from happy love.

Lady Yarrow watched his departure from her

chamber window. He was not conscious of this attention, but fortunately he raised his eyes as he lifted his hat, and she believed that he had thus bade her another 'farewell.' She spoke of the circumstance with great feeling to Ann, and was proud and pleased all day in the imaginary remembrance. Indeed, when she had forgotten many other particulars of his visit, she recalled that last upward glance, which she had taken for herself.

On the following Sabbath Angus was in his pulpit as usual. No one commented on his absence. Monday and Tuesday were particularly stormy days, but on Wednesday the rain abated and it was possible to walk to Rodney House. He found the family together in the parlor. Bertha had the *Court Journal* in her hand. She had been reading it to her father and mother. When Angus was seated and the natural preliminaries to conversation over, she said :

"We have just been speculating about Scotia's new lover, Mr. Bruce. The *Journal* says she was driving last Wednesday and Thursday with a very distinguished-looking divine. Some Court chaplain, I suppose?"

"More likely some one whom she met at Oxford," said the Colonel. "Well, Mr. Bruce, how did you enjoy your visit to Edinburgh? And what is going on there?"

"I was in London, sir. I did not go to Edinburgh at all."

"In London? Why did you not tell me you were going to London? I would have given you a letter of introduction to Lady Yarrow, and you could have brought us word how my girl was faring."

"I spent my whole time at Lady Yarrow's house."

Mrs. Rodney looked up angrily, as she said : "I think it is a pity you did not have a letter from us. Scotia's acquaintance was hardly a proper basis of introduction."

"Lady Yarrow is my adopted mother. My own mother has lived with her more than twenty-five years."

"As a—a——"

"As her friend, and companion."

"Really, Mr. Bruce, this is very remarkable ! Very !" said the Colonel.

A succession of small thunder-bolts could scarcely have been more remarkable. The Colonel and Mrs. Rodney found themselves unable to discuss the circumstance, but Bertha said, with apparent indifference :

"Then it was you who were driving with Scotia ? How funny ! and how very interesting ! How is Scotia ?"

"She looks remarkably well, and appears to be very happy."

He had supposed that his information would cause surprise, but he was not prepared for the chill silence which followed it. Every one was ill at ease. Mrs. Rodney and Bertha quickly made an apology for their withdrawal, and went to Bertha's room to discuss an event so astounding. The Colonel was indisposed to talk, and let every subject drop without discussing it. Angus made some trite remark about the gay life of London as ministering only to the senses, and the Colonel said querulously :

"Do you mean, Mr. Bruce, that the delights of the senses are not worth having ?"

"No, sir ; but I think there is a certain waste of life unless we go further than this."

Colonel Rodney was silent. Angus did not know whether from approval or dissent. After a short pause, he spoke of the great crowd of humanity in London. "Contrasted with the steadfastness of nature," he said, "this crowd wears a look of meanness, as of straws and dust, blown here and there by winds."

"Well, Mr. Bruce, some love this tide of life blown about Pall Mall and Cheapside, just as others love heath, and hill, and the long stretching downs, and the sea. Every man to his taste."

The tones were still touchy and out of sympathy. Angus was not willing to leave him in such a mood, and he made another attempt: "I think in the country we acquire a love for the subtle responsiveness of nature, and then we find the turmoil of cities wearisome and vulgar."

"Perhaps. I do not know.—Mr. Bruce, what did you go to London for? Will you tell me?"

"Yes, sir. I went to see Miss Rodney. I found my life so miserable in her absence and silence. I went to see her, and to speak to her."

"Is your life less miserable now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you nothing more to say to me?"

"A great deal more, with your permission."

He bowed, and Angus continued: "I have loved Miss Rodney ever since the first moment I saw her."

"Yes. All men say something like that."

"It may be generally true, though all men say it. It is true in my case. Miss Rodney returns my affection. She does me such great honor! She gives me such great joy! I ask you as any man ought to ask for such a pearl of womanhood—with all my heart, for your sanction to our marriage, at some future time."

"I am very weary of the subject of marriage, Mr. Bruce. The one now in consideration—I mean the marriage of my daughter Bertha and Mr. Blair Rodney—has brought me only annoyance and disappointment. Let me ask a favor of you. Say no more at present about your love for my daughter Scotia. Ask her to be equally considerate for me. I should like, when she returns, to have her a little while, without any sense of change. If it is to come, let me not feel it yet. If you show her love, if you speak words of love to her, let me not see it; or hear them. So far, I give you what you ask. It is all that at present is possible to me, without suffering."

"It is enough, sir. I thank you for so much."

"Then good-afternoon, Mr. Bruce. To-morrow, when you come, I will take up any other question you like. This conversation is complete at present, and"—offering his hand—"it is to make no difference between you and me—unless, it bring us more kindly together."

With these hopeful words Bruce willingly accepted his dismissal. The power of intervals is great. To-morrow it would be possible to let life go on, as if words so full of fate had never been spoken.

The ladies saw Bruce walking through the wet, desolate park, and they returned to the Colonel. They were feeling sore and offended, both with the minister and with Lady Yarrow; and Mrs. Rodney said decidedly:

"I will tell you how it is, Kinross. Jemima got that man placed at Rodney Law. He was sent here as a spy. I have no doubt he has reported regularly to Jemima everything that went on in our house."

"I am sure you are as far wrong as a woman can

possibly be. Angus Bruce a spy ! It is an impossible idea ! ”

“ What did he go to London for, if not that ?—unless he is in love with Scotia ! ”

“ Dorinda ! For pity’s sake, put away any thought that implies another marriage. I have enough of that subject at present with Blair and Bertha,” and he left the room angrily muttering :

“ Marriage, and death, and division, make barren our lives.”

XIII.

RECOVERED.

"God unexpected, evil unforeseen,
Appear by turns, as Fortune shifts the scene."

"Then will I own I ought not to complain,
Since that sweet hour, is worth whole years of pain."

"What then remains, but after past away
To take the good Vicissitude of Joy?
To thank the gracious gods for what they give,
Possess our souls, and while we live, to live."

—Dryden.

YES; great is the power of intervals. Without explanation, without any attempt to come to an understanding, or to re-establish a confidential and sympathetic relation, the mere passage of time accomplished all. In a couple of weeks the Colonel and the minister had fallen back naturally into their old amicable conditions; and Mrs. Rodney and Bertha had wisdom enough to accept graciously the inevitable fact of Bruce's connection with Lady Yarrow. It was a never-ending source of speculation with them, but in the main, Bruce received the additional consideration which was socially its due.

With a not unpleasant monotony the weeks passed quietly onward. Bruce was writing constant letters to Scotia, and receiving constant letters from her; he did not, therefore, feel any interest in the *Court Journal*.

But he went frequently to Rodney House, and as the spring advanced, his walks with the Colonel assumed a very constant character. In this respect he slipped without intention into Scotia's place, and a feeling of confidence grew steadily between the two men.

Through the broad fields, and under the wide gray skies they walked together; sometimes in eager discussion, sometimes almost silent; the rich brown earth, and the quick life of the young plantations giving an aerial tone to their intercourse not readily expressed. Both men loved nature and the scenes of a country life in a genuine way. They could stand and watch with pleasure the short-horned red and white cattle ruminating in the warm farm-yards; or the sheep chewing and coughing among the turnips, while the shepherds and the collies were counting them. The fleecy bits of wool fluttering on the bare hedges caused an intelligent glance between them. Without words they read each other's thoughts about them—the coming spring, the building birds, and the cozy nests they would furnish.

As the weather grew warmer there was constant delight for them in the plowing. "Look at Jack Lowther," the Colonel would say proudly. "Jack has an eye keen as a sportsman, and a hand as sensitive as a fly-fisher; he could not make such gore-furrows and gathered-ridges, and cleaved-down ridges, and head-ridges, and ribbing, if he had not. It is an art to plow straight and deep, as Jack does. And listen how he talks to his horses! Jack told me that they sulk at their plowing unless they hear his voice at the plow-shafts."

"If I were an artist," said Bruce admiringly, "I should come to such plowmen and such horses for a

picture. It is a study in anatomy to watch the head and forequarters of that furrow horse. Look how proudly and gladly he bends his knees, and grasps the soil with his hoofs ! And see how gracefully his glossy neck is curved ! I think a fine horse, plowing, has the most noble action in the animal world."

"You have not seen a war horse scenting the battle afar off."

Bruce would not relinquish his point, and they discussed it with a pleasant warmth all the way to the Stone Pillar. As they returned, they met the men going home after their day's work, and the Colonel said, "What individualities nature makes ! Compare these Scotch hinds with the low caste Hindoos, or even with the English farm hand or the Irish peasant."

"These Scotch hinds and shepherds have strong faces."

"You may see in them the damp, rainy weather—the gray cold mornings and evenings—the strong equal force of seasons which take root in their hearts. They are sons of the soil. Lowther, who comes from the Border, has much of its breezy atmosphere and its singing 'waters' in his nature. Look at him now ! He has left his plow at the furrow end. With what an easy, lolling movement he is riding his barebacked horse to stable ! How his big-booted feet dangle at the sides of the animal ! And hear how he is whistling, and how the plow-chains clank merrily to the melody !"

Sometimes they rode as far as the sea coast, and then, leaving the carriages, walked an hour or more on the high crags which battlemented the North Sea ; and not unfrequently to the low estuary where the river found its way back to the ocean—a very desolate

stretch, but one which in certain moods had a pronounced charm, though it was but a bare strand, matted with thistles and such amphibious weeds as are bred from the embrace of earth and the salt ooze.

Then came the April smell of rainy fields, and the glimmering of rain-drenched leaves made bright by sudden sunshine ; and anon, the hawthorn blossoms, and the orchard blooms, and

The flycatcher on the lawn,
With the bean flower's boon,
And the blackbird's tune,

and all the joy of May. Scotia was to return home in May, and Bertha was to be married the first week in June. Blair was already filling Rodney House with his imposing personality.

Blair disapproved of Mr. Bruce. He always had disapproved of him, and he was not conciliated by the fact of the minister's claim upon Lady Yarrow. Indeed he resented what he was pleased to call his 'intrusion' into their family. For it was a favorite wonder between Bertha and himself how far the Rodneys would be benefited by Aunt Yarrow's wealth. Hitherto Scotia and Bertha had been regarded as her nearest relations ; but "an adopted son," Blair said to Bertha, "is a very serious interloper. Old women are fanciful, and Bruce is undeniably attractive ; he may push himself before the right heirs."

Never had Bruce seen the Colonel so fretful and unhappy. He had the reward of those who call some special thing unto themselves, and are determined to have it—disappointment and heartache. The plan he had made was successful after a fashion. He had secured Blair Rodney for a son-in-law, but Blair was not marrying the daughter he had chosen to inherit.

That was his first disappointment. The second was even more serious,—he had come to dislike Blair with all the intensity of his intense temperament. He could hardly believe that the young man had ever been pleasant to him. He told his wife that Blair had spoiled Bertha. “She has already identified herself with Blair’s interests, and Blair has taught her to believe his interests are not identical with ours. I have lost a daughter, Dorinda, and I have not gained a son.” He said such words very often, and very sadly.

At first Mrs. Rodney had denied the position, but even to her there had come a conviction, that after the marriage was over she would find herself far from a welcome guest at Innergrey. For when Blair arrived early in May, he at once assumed the tone of “master” as far as the Dower House was concerned. His objections to several things she had ordered were decisive. He would have this, and he would not have that, and on the first Sabbath he positively refused to go to Rodney kirk.

“I dislike Mr. Bruce,” he said. “I do not approve of his views on many subjects, and I get no spiritual good from him. Besides, I think Bertha and I, as master and mistress of Innergrey, ought to worship at the little kirk near there.”

“And I am glad he is going to worship there”; said the Colonel privately. “I shall be more likely to worship at Rodney, only he did not give his real reasons for the preference.”

“I think he did, Kinross. I know he dislikes Mr. Bruce very much.”

“He dislikes me—us, I should say. And he cannot endure not to be first, wherever he is. If he sits in Rodney kirk he sits in our pew, and is one of our

household. At Innergrey, he will be master. He will be the greatest man in the congregation. He can spread Blair Rodney over kirk, minister, and parish."

"Perhaps it is natural to feel so."

"Perhaps it is—but there is a grace above nature. It is supposed to actuate Christians."

Every day now the Colonel and Blair Rodney drifted further apart. For there was now no necessity for Blair to efface himself and be conciliating. He had won Bertha, and the estate. The cards for his wedding festival were already scattered over the country side, the preparations for the great ceremony were nearly complete. The Colonel had given his word about the estate ; he was not a man to break a tittle of it. Even if he were inclined to do so, Blair had a letter from the Colonel in which he distinctly said : "I make you, Blair, heir of Rodney Law ; because I have no living son, and you are the next male in the direct line." There was also the tremendous power of the public knowledge of this decision. All who knew the Rodneys, knew that he was to marry Bertha Rodney. And Bertha idolized him. There was no fear of her withdrawal ; and her constancy meant all that was included in his right as heir.

So the last weeks of May were unhappy weeks. Though the weather was charming, and the outside world busy with its delightful spring business, Rodney House was pervaded by a restless, dissatisfied element. All its pleasant, methodical ways were disturbed by the marriage preparations, and by the disputings over them. The Colonel excluded himself from all such consultations. He took the privilege his admitted frail health gave him, and kept his own

room until the afternoon brought Mr. Bruce to be his companion. "All this turmoil makes me miserable, Mr. Bruce, and I keep out of it," he said sadly, and he would have been still more miserable if he had known how really glad Bertha and Blair were he did keep out of it.

During this same time Bertha and Blair would also have been very miserable, if they had known how often the Colonel came near annulling the whole connection, as far as he had the power to do so. "A man alters his will as often as he likes, Mr. Bruce?" he asked one day. And one word of assent from the minister at that time would have made the Colonel take an irrevocable step as regarded Blair Rodney's succession. But Bruce looked at him with denial in his eyes, and remained silent.

"I shall ask my lawyer. I shall send for him to-morrow."

"I would ask your conscience. I would ask it this night."

"Oh, Mr. Bruce, I am so unhappy!"

"All changes make a certain melancholy. What we have to put behind us is part of ourselves. We must die to this life, Colonel, before we enter another."

"If I could see the future."

"The future is shaped out of the past, and is in God's hands. Leave it there."

"I try to. I have made a great mistake. I see now, how hard it is to order our own way."

This conversation occurred on a Saturday night. On the following Tuesday Scotia would be home. On Thursday the marriage would take place. Blair was jubilant; there was more of Blair Rodney in the house every hour. Bertha behaved very prettily. She was

desirous of leaving a sweet memory, and these few last days would preserve it best. Mrs. Rodney was weary and fretful. So many things devolved on her. She wished now that she had accepted Scotia's offer to return home earlier, and relieve her of part of the burden. But when the offer came she was just in the first enthusiasm of orders and directions. It appeared then to be very easy work ; she did not think it likely that she would tire of it.

And she feared some unpleasant collision. She could see that Blair and Bertha, in their effusive happiness, were selfish and dictatorial. The Colonel was hard to manage as things were. Scotia would probably have good grounds for complaint, and if Scotia and her father began to sympathize with each other, no one could tell what trouble might ensue. So Mrs. Rodney advised Scotia not to return until the wedding was at hand, and Scotia was not unwilling to escape its trying antecedents.

"This is the last Sabbath of my maiden life !" said Bertha with a sigh. "I remember my betrothal Sabbath so well. And next Sabbath will be my bride Sabbath ! Blair, dear one, how strange it all is !"

She delighted in such platitudes, and Blair felt them to be the proper reflections. For the time they made Bertha and himself the central pivot on which even Sabbath days turned. And self-complacency is such a comfortable sensation. If a man is kept under its influence, he naturally spreads himself, and takes up more room than he ought.

"I am so lucky about weather ;" said Bertha, as she smoothed her snowy muslin dress. "See how the sun is shining, and what a delicate perfume comes in through the open window."

"'Tis from the wall-flowers, and the May lilies ;" said Mrs. Rodney.

Then they went to church, and because Mrs. Rodney was alone they went with her to Rodney Kirk. And Blair took several occasions to point out this bit of self-denial to her. "I dislike Mr. Bruce, and I think he preaches a very unprofitable sermon, but Bertha and I cannot suffer you to go alone, mother."

"Dear me ! I must not forget that this is my last Sabbath in childhood's kirk !" and Bertha sighed and looked sweetly mournful and very charming indeed.

In the afternoon Mrs. Rodney declared herself unable to go to church again. She said she was "sleepy and worn out, and could not give attention to the service." So Blair and Bertha went to Innergrey very early, having determined privately to drive around by the house, and see if some work ordered to be done on the garden had been completed.

Soon after they had gone the Colonel came downstairs. He was dressed for kirk, but looked thoughtful and preoccupied. He said he had had a strange dream, and asked where Bertha and Blair were.

"They went to the kirk by Innergrey, I believe."

"Are you going to kirk, Dorinda ?"

"I am too sick and tired."

"Then I will have the victoria, and Traill shall drive me."

"Blair and Bertha have taken the victoria, and Traill is driving them."

"Well I suppose I must have the landau and Jack Lowther." He gave the order and was silent until the carriage was at the door ; then he kissed his wife and bade her rest till his return. It was a pleasure to catch Lowther's smiling face ; the man looked so happy,

and spoke so cheerily, and did his work so willingly, that he radiated a glad content. The Colonel answered his smile, and a load seemed to fall from his heart. But this was not all. In some way Lowther had been a part of his dream. He could not recall in what way, but he knew that he had seen the man in its shadowy presentiment. He was searching his mind for this half-forgotten dream all the way to kirk.

It was hardly service time when they arrived, but the Colonel was glad to surround himself with that atmosphere of retirement from earth, which was there possible. He had rarely felt so little able to control either his outer or inner man. Drifting thoughts from every corner of his past life floated through his memory; he was like a feather wafted here and there, as chance happened to carry him. When Bruce began the service, he made a great effort to collect himself, but his soul would not attend; it seemed to be steeped in quiescence and indifference; a state—if people would but notice it—often prefiguring some sharp and sudden call upon its utmost forces or its endurance.

Through the open windows he heard vaguely the wind in the fir trees outside the kirk, and the bees humming among the flowers that sweetened the graves. He knew that he rose and sat down with the congregation, and that their voices, and the voice of the preacher, was in his ears like sounds far off and far away from his care or interest. But his eyes were mostly closed, and he felt no inclination to use any other sense.

Toward the end of the final hymn there was a decided movement at the inner door of the kirk, and one of the elders spoke to two strangers who entered. One was a man of more than fifty years of age, grizzled and

tanned with exposure to fierce suns and hot winds. The other was much younger, and looked like one accustomed to carry arms, and to have his own way. His manner was imperious and impatient; for while his companion hesitated to disobey the sign and whispered injunction of the kirk-officer, he totally disregarded it.

With swift, natural steps he went to Colonel Rodney's pew. The congregation was rising—the preacher waiting to give the benediction—the Colonel standing with closed eyes and both hands resting on the top of his staff. His white, impassive face betrayed no knowledge of the interruption. He was indeed unconscious of it until the man was before him. He said one word. The Colonel opened his eyes, and his staff fell to the ground. For he had flung up his arms, and been caught in the arms of the speaker.

“Father! My Father! It is Archie! I was not killed at Durphoot camp. Lord Moffat has brought me back. Father! dear Father!”

The sweet love which filled these broken sentences—the strong arms around him—the cheek wet with tears against his cheek—the great blue eyes, whose candid gaze he knew so well—all the joyful certainty of the miracle, took but one swift, glad minute to enact. The minister's solemn voice invoking the benediction had scarce ceased ere the Colonel was all alive to the great and wonderful joy that had come to him.

“My son! My son!”

The words mingled themselves with the son's “My father! My father!” Recognition was instantaneous as thought, and sure as life. And just as quickly the wine of joy flew to the Colonel's heart, and made him strong from head to foot.

He took his son's arm and with an irresistible movement led him to the front of the pulpit. In this movement there was something imperative and peremptory. The people were arrested by it. They looked with amazement on the two men standing in a place so authoritative and distinctive; they were still more amazed when the Colonel in a glad resonant voice cried out :

"Friends and neighbors! Stay a moment and rejoice with me! This is my son! He was dead, and he is alive again; he was lost, and he is found!"

Lord Moffat came quickly to the young man's side, Bruce—still wearing his gown—to the Colonel's. There was an indescribable murmur of sympathy through the kirk—the sweet vibration of a thousand blessings in one.

"This is my son! This is my son!" He kept repeating the words, as leaning on the young man's arm, he passed through the rejoicing congregation. He did not know that he was weeping—that tears of unspeakable joy were rolling down his cheeks—that he was walking without his staff—that he was suddenly twenty years younger.

The little party were stayed at every step by some tenant or shepherd, each took the young laird's hand and gave him a "God bless you, sir!" The Colonel could say nothing in reply but "My Son! Balburn. My son! Craill. My son! Tyndall." He was beside himself with joy. And Bruce, seeing it, lifted his hand to command silence, and then lifted his voice in a verse, which all instantly took up, and so singing, went out of the House of God, praising Him :

Who doth redeem thy life, that thou
To death may'st not go down ;
Who thee with loving kindness doth
And tender mercies crown.*

Jack Lowther stood at the carriage, and one of the elders remembered the Colonel's hat and staff. He would not, of himself, have noticed the want of either. He put his son beside him, and Lord Moffat and the minister occupied the other seat. And now and then Jack Lowther turned his large face backward. It was shining like the sun. Jack would have dearly liked to whistle "Muirland Willie," if it had not been the Sabbath. And once he caught his master's eye, and gave him back his smile, and then the Colonel suddenly remembered his dream, and knew that some one behind him had perceived the joy that was at hand—had known all the details of it so accurately, that even his unusual driver had been foreseen. And in a moment of spiritual comradeship, he involuntarily stretched out his hand to this unseen and unknown friend.

He soon found out that Archibald spoke little and very imperfect English. "He has been in the colleges of Bokhara and the camps of Khiva," said Lord Moffat, "but he has a noble heart, and good abilities, and he will soon recapture all, and more than he has lost from the past."

At this hour the Colonel hardly seemed able to care for the past. Archibald was beside him. He could look into his face, clasp his hand, and hear him speak. "Let the past go." It troubled him to hear it named.

As they approached the house, Mrs. Rodney heard the carriage wheels, and she rose and went to the win-

* Psalm 103. Version allowed by General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland.

dow. She knew Bruce, but who were these strangers? Her first feeling was one of anger. Surely the Colonel knew how tired she was—how much she had to do. What did he mean by bringing company home, and on the Sabbath day? Bruce also! The minister never visited on the Sabbath. Why had he come this day? A sudden fear about Bertha and Blair made her sick. Had anything happened them? Were the strangers doctors?

Then the Colonel's voice startled her. There was a ring in it unknown for years. He came upstairs like a young man. There were other steps with his. She stood in the middle of her room, prescient of some strange event, trembling with its uncertainty. The Colonel slightly opened the door and looked in. His face was so changed, his voice was so changed, but before she could speak and ask any question, he had taken her to his breast, he was asking her "if she could bear a great joy? If she could believe what was the most unlikely of all events to happen? Oh, Dorinda! can you think of Archie alive? Of Archie coming home again? Of Archie here? Dearest, do not faint and miss your wonderful happiness. Archie! Archie! Come here now! Come here."

She sunk into a chair speechless, her eyes dilating with rapture and love as the young man approached. He fell on his knees by her side. He put his arms around her neck. He drew her head into his breast, and whispered over and over, that one, sweet, ineffable word, "Mother! Mother! Mother!"

Then the Colonel closed the door and left them alone. He began to think of his duties as a host, of the gratitude due his unknown benefactor, and suddenly—as if he had been struck by the thought—of

Bertha and Blair. As they entered his mind, they entered the house. The Colonel saw them coming toward him. They also saw the Colonel, and his face startled them, though they had no time to make a private comment on it. But as soon as he was near, Bertha said :

"Father, how well—how strange you look ! Has anything happened?"

"The strangest thing that could happen, Bertha. Your lost brother Archibald has come home. Lord Moffat found him at Bokhara."

"Archibald come home? Impossible!"

"He is now with your mother. Go, welcome him!" and Bertha, without a word, fled upstairs; but she went not to her mother's room, she ran to her own chamber, and locking the doors threw herself on her bed in a paroxysm of apprehensive misery.

"Oh, why did he come just now? Why did he not wait just one week? Then I would not have cared so much! Oh, how miserable I am! And I was so happy! How cruel! How cruel!"

Blair took the information with incredulity. "It is quite impossible, sir," he said. "After so long an absence, you might be very easily deceived. I should not be too sanguine, if I were you."

"Thank God, there is no deception! I knew my son at once. He has brought evidence beyond doubt with him. Why, my boy has in his pocket to-day the only two letters his mother ever wrote him; the little purse she netted for him; the faded silhouette of his sister Scotia, sitting on her mother's knee. There is no possible mistake. It is my very own son Archibald!"

"Then, sir, it will be necessary for me to have a

very quick understanding with you concerning my rights."

"Your rights? Yes, yes! But it is the Sabbath. We will speak about them in the morning."

Blair bowed and went to his room. Sabbath or no Sabbath, he gave way there to his rage and disappointment. It had been a great effort to hide it from the Colonel. "Confusion," he muttered. "What is to be done; I shall lose the estate now, of course. Well, he shall pay me well to give up my claim—and marry his daughter. I am not going to bind myself for a trifle. This new-found son. Pshaw! he is an impostor. And the Colonel knows it. But I have felt that I was disliked lately. No impostor shall deceive me; I will find him out, and send him to the treadmill."

But even while he promised himself so much, he had an invincible doubt in his heart. Assert as he would, he believed Archibald Rodney had been recovered. He felt that his claim was already set aside, and he had a mortifying conviction that Colonel Rodney was glad to be rid of him and his pretensions to Rodney.

A few hours with the young laird turned these doubts into certainties. When Archibald entered the dining-room with his mother on his arm, his personality was beyond impugning. When he stood by his father's side, he was the Colonel's youth come back again. He also remembered the most trivial affairs of his childhood's home—the names of his horse and dog—of many of his father's regiment. He could describe yet ladies who had visited them. With Lord Moffat's assistance as a translator, he could give the history of all the events and changes of his own cap-

tivity. There was no more chance of denying his claim than of denying that two and two make four.

He told Bertha this before they parted that night. They were sitting in the large drawing-room, where they had gone to be alone. It had been prepared for the marriage-feast, and the preparations had already a look of being out of place and unnecessary.

"It is really my brother," said Bertha.

"It is your brother. There is no doubt of it."

"Will his return affect us very much, dear Blair?"

"It will prevent our marriage—for some time."

"Oh, Blair! Blair! How can you look at it in such a cruel way?"

"We must be sensible, Bertha. Your father promised us Innergrey, and one thousand pounds a year. That, with my income, would have been sufficient."

"And he will not take Innergrey from us. That would not be like father."

"But if he does not give us the income to keep the house?"

"But he will, Blair. I am sure he will."

"I do not think so."

"Why not?"

"Because the new heir will require the income, my dear. Rodney will not support two heirs-apparent."

He spoke coldly and with some temper. Poor Bertha's heart was sick with fear. She tried all her pretty wiles on this big man, sulky with his own loss of prestige, but without effect. She thought he never bade her "good-night" so carelessly. He said he was so full of anxiety, he did not know what he was doing. But Bertha felt that he ought to have remembered her anxiety—the crushing shame and chagrin she

must suffer, if her marriage was postponed—all the womanly humiliations she would have to bear—and added thereto, the same loss of prestige he felt personally to be so bitter.

XIV.

THE LOST FOUND.

“ This money has a power above
The stars and fates to manage Love ;
Whose arrows learned poets hold
That never fail, are tipp'd with gold.
And though Love's all the world's pretense
Money's the mythologic sense
The real substance of the shadow
Which all address and courtship's made to.”
—*Hudibras*.
“ The conscience of a people is their power.”
—*Dryden*.

THIS eventful Sabbath had other points of interest besides those affecting the house of Rodney. It was to Angus Bruce also a turning point in life. For it was the last Sabbath he would ever officiate as a minister of the established Kirk of Scotland. The disruption so long anticipated had taken place, and Angus had been one of the four hundred ministers who had left kirk and manse on the question of the supreme authority of Christ in all spiritual matters. He had intended to speak to the people on the subject after the service, or rather to appoint a meeting to consider the peculiar condition of his congregation, and collect the suffrages and assistance of all who purposed to form themselves into a Free Kirk. But the subject had been put out of his mind by the unexpected circum-

stance of Archibald's restoration to his family, and his native land.

However, when he returned to the manse he found a large company awaiting him. The books and pictures which had given to the room its only element of comfort were now packed for removal, and on the rough pine boxes this grave society were calmly sitting reviewing the opinions which had left them churchless in a land of churches. Bruce's entrance was a welcome interruption, for no one had heard the particulars of the great convention, and all were solemnly curious about it.

"Glad to see you, Minister," said Elder Bogie. "We are nane o'us fit for the week's wark till we hear o' the great wark in Edinburgh. And we are proud indeed that you spoke for us all on that day ; and now we want to stand by your side, in whate'er you think it right for us to do. 'Twould be a grand day, Minister?"

"Such a day as none now living may ever see again. Such a night before the day, I may add. For none but little children or the most thoughtless of men and women slept an hour in it. Indeed, the streets of Edinburgh were crowded with earnest men, who could not rest for the thoughts within them. And the ministers were going from group to group, stirring up the people to stand for the rights of the Kirk of Scotland. Oh men ! the beautiful city has seen many an anxious night in her long history, but not even when Prince Charlie entered it, and the gray old castle looked down on his gallant nobles and Highland host, did it see so noble a gathering ! It was the host of the Lord, ready every man of them to give the last penny of his substance, and the last drop of his blood, for the honor of God's name and God's house. Day came, but nobody

thought of their own affairs. Shops were shuttered and locked, men and masters alike, were waiting to see if the ministers would have grace and strength to stand by the Kirk, when their allegiance would make them homeless and penniless."

"Honest men! They didna fail her, Minister?"

"Not one of them, Deacon Lusk. I was in the Assembly Hall when the Marquis of Bute appeared for the Queen. Dr. Welsh, as the moderator, made the complaint for the Kirk—told all her wrongs and humiliations, specially the putting of the civil power above her, in her own spiritual functions; the contempt with which her petitions for redress had been received, such, and so on. Then advising all who were for a Free Kirk to withdraw, taking with them the Confession of Faith, and the standards of the Kirk of Scotland, he bowed to Lord Bute, left his chair and turned to the door. Dr. Chalmers lifted his hat and followed him—then Campbell of Monzie—and Dr. Gordon, and Dr. Macfarlane—and man after man—and row after row—till on the benches that had been so crowded, there was scarce a man left. In a few silent and solemn minutes, four hundred ministers and five hundred elders had withdrawn. The rest of the great audience rose to their feet. They were still as death, gazing breathless on the scene. Many were weeping. I have no doubt all were praying."

On a theme so grand it was easy to talk the night away; and indeed it was in the first melancholy gleam of dawn that Bruce walked to the manse gate with his friends. For a few minutes he remained there, watching the men as they went to their sheepfolds and fishing boats—their large, plaided, bonneted forms look-

ing through the misty, fantastic shroud, as colossally unreal as men in a vision.

Then he returned to his desolated, uncomfortable room, and fell suddenly to his lowest physical ebb. He could not think any more; feel any more; he could not even keep his eyes open. He let his personality escape, flutter away, evaporate. He was soon in that deep sleep which visits exhausted men. The packing-cases, the disorder, the meagerness of the furniture, gave an atmosphere of great unrest to the room. But in the midst of it, on the hard, black couch, the handsome form of the sleeping minister lay in perfect peace. Fleshly material men sink almost as low as pure matter when they sleep, but the eager soul of Angus Bruce still illumined its mask of beautiful clay. His eyelids were luminous; his mouth smiling; his long, white hands, though quite still, looked as if they remembered their skill and aptitudes. For though it cannot reflect, the body does remember—the feet of the dancer, the fingers of the musician or writer, have a memory special to their powers.

Alas! it is in youth, when we need it least, that such sleep is possible. Years exhaust the capacity for it, and the soul has fretted and worried the animal instincts away which brought the sweet restorative. While Bruce was renewing life in oblivion to all its demands, the Colonel was wasting it in restless movements and intense feeling. Though his son was fast asleep in the next room, though twice he had walked softly to the bedside and looked at him, he could not himself reach that blessed refreshment which he so much needed.

It was not that he was tossed about with conflicting opinions, or any uncertainty of purpose. He had faced

the subject of Blair Rodney from the first with a positive, unwavering decision. He knew precisely what he ought to do, and what he would do, in regard to what Blair had called his rights. In this respect he was more fortunate than his wife. Mrs. Rodney did not dislike Blair as heartily as the Colonel did, and she felt very keenly for her daughter Bertha. She had almost angered her husband by what he called her partiality. For, happy as the mother was to receive back her son, she could not avoid an overwhelming pity for the girl whose prospects were so altered by the unforeseen circumstance.

It was truly an overwhelming affliction to Bertha. She had passed, that afternoon, out of the sunshine, into a gloom every hour growing blacker. There had been for her just one step between joy and despair. For she did despair, even in the first few whispered words between Blair and herself on the event. It had made a change in him even then, sharp and sure as that made by a freezing wind passing over tropical flowers. Her hopes had met their death. She could not lift her heart above this conviction.

About the middle of the night she tapped at her mother's door, and Mrs. Rodney was almost glad to escape the enthusiasms of her husband to share the pitiful forebodings of her daughter. She took the girl in her arms and encouraged her to tell all her fear and suffering. And it was characteristic that they spoke very low, and controlled themselves, lest the servants should divine their pain and misinterpret it.

"Oh mother, mother! How can I bear it?"

"I do not think the marriage will be put off, Bertha, Blair loves you."

"He said unless father gave us one thousand pounds a year we could not keep up Innergrey. Mother, can you persuade father to keep his word?"

"My dear! No one has any occasion to persuade your father to keep his word; but in this case, your father's word was dependent on circumstances, which every one believed to be absolutely beyond change. Yet change has come, and one change must bring many others. I will do my best, but about money matters I have little knowledge and little influence. But your father will do right. I am sure of that."

"Blair thinks Innergrey, and one thousand pounds yearly, barely his right. He wants both settled on us for life."

"Blair is unreasonable."

"No, no, mother! Think how much more he has been hoping for. Mother, if the wedding is put off I shall die of shame. Every one will pity me. I could tell you twenty girls who will call to see me in my misery and disappointment, who would drive twenty miles out of their way rather than call to see me a happy wife at Innergrey. I shall be the talk of all the country side. Women will make parties to discuss my position. They will say 'Blair Rodney was glad to be rid of me'—that he would not marry me without the estate—that I have been so proud and conceited, so evidently happy, that they are not sorry for me. Men meeting in their fields, or in their houses, will pity 'poor Bertha Rodney' and call Blair the bad names they call each other—or else they will say, 'Blair Rodney was not a bird to be caught with chaff.' Mother, mother, do you not see and feel it all? And the beautiful home I was to have had! And all my pretty dresses! If I should put one on, some

person would be sure to say, 'Poor thing! that dress was bought for the wedding that never came off.'"

"My darling! I see and feel it all with you. But I think the home is still yours. And the dresses will yet be happily worn. I cannot believe Blair will break off the marriage now."

"You did not see his face last night. He barely touched my lips when he left me. His voice was hard and cruel."

"Then, surely, you do not want to marry a man so mercenary and so cruel."

"I do! I do! I cannot bear the public pity and shame. I would rather bear the private misery. Mother, can you not find out some way? Have you no comfort for me?"

"My dear, is it not some comfort to get back your only brother?"

"No, it is not! I know nothing about Archibald. I was only a baby when he was carried off. I do not think he is at all pleasant. He has such strange ways. He does not know how to behave. He hardly knows how to sit down; and when he stands, he looks as if he was going to order us about like a gang of slaves. He is a pagan, too, or very near one."

"Bertha, stop! Archibald will be, in a year or two, the finest man in Fifeshire. He has had an Oriental training. He is now to be properly educated for his position. And oh! what a loving heart he has! I can tell you a hundred things——"

"Do not tell me one of them. If he has a loving heart, let him give up something to his sister. I shall tell him so in the morning."

"You cannot possibly make him understand the position, and your father would never forgive you if

you tried to make him understand. I do believe Archie would resign everything, but would you break your father's heart and crush the hopes God has regiven him?"

"My heart is breaking! My heart is breaking!"

In such wretched complaining the night passed. At the dawn, just when Angus was dismissing his friends at the manse gate, Mrs. Rodney declared herself no longer able to listen and endure, and Bertha promised to try to sleep. But the sleep of both women was fitful and broken, and strange and unbidden thoughts came alike to them. The mother put them angrily away; the daughter nursed and encouraged them.

"Why had Archibald come back only to make trouble? They had been accustomed to think of him as one of the Sons of God—a splendid, angelic youth among the host of heaven, doing God's will. This strange, foreign-looking man, reared in the tents of Khiva and the colleges of Bokhara—the very Rome of Islamism—with the Talmud in his heart, and the breath of deserts and wild manhood about him, was a contradiction hard to accept."

The sister frankly said so. And who but God knew the agonies of opposing emotions which the mother fought down, tenderly recalled, fought back again, till worn out with the heart-conflict she found relief in a passionate abandon to tears. She told her husband they were tears of joy; she told her heart so; and then she remembered Bertha, and wept again and again, until she was seriously ill.

Come! Let us be honest with ourselves. Is not this the most dreadful thing about death, that some commonplace being replaces the dear one that was

once our very life? That meals at stated hours and trivial pleasures fill the great void we thought never would be filled? That the beloved has finally taken rank with things perfectly indifferent, so that if it should be suddenly said, "He is here!" we should be more embarrassed than happy. We should not know where to place him. Alas! alas! for the comfortable homes so often built upon the extinction of a great love! Bertha Rodney did not commit a strange or an uncommon sin when she wished her brother among the angels, and wept because he was alive to his own again.

In his own way, Blair spent an equally miserable night. True, he could not be said to lose what he had never possessed; but people do not surrender without pain a hope of riches and position so nearly a certainty as his hope had been. And he did feel it to be something of a trial to resign Bertha. He had confided in her, gone to her for sympathy, told her all his plans, and felt a delicious sense of property in her grace and beauty. Something must be done, and done quickly, about his affairs; and he was impatient of the extra delay caused by the Colonel's restless night. For it was the afternoon ere he was ready to answer Blair's second urgent request for an interview.

Blair was amazed at the happy father's appearance, for joy is a restorative; and Colonel Rodney really looked as if he had run backward, and brought again the lost years which he had spent in weeping for his son. He stood up, alert and watchful, with a tinge of unusual haughtiness in his manner.

"You have sent twice this morning for an interview, Blair. What can I now do for you?"

"Sir, the question is unrequired. You must know

that my affairs have become urgent. The ground on which I was to enter your family has been cut away from under my feet. A new basis must be arranged, or we must part as soon as possible."

"What basis do you propose? I have no doubt you have considered the position. I must admit I have been too excited to do so."

"A moment's reflection will, however, show you that some steps must be taken to prevent the scandal and gossip there will be if my marriage is broken off or even postponed. I am willing, under the peculiar circumstances, to resign my claim, and marry your daughter, for a life interest in Innergrey and one thousand pounds yearly to support the place."

"Sir, your 'claim,' as you call it, was based upon a condition which exists no longer, and which never did exist, except through my will. And I will not give you one half-penny to marry my daughter. If my daughter has set her heart upon marrying you, I will allow her the use of Innergrey so long as I live, and I will give her two hundred pounds yearly."

"You promised us one thousand pounds yearly. With my own income, it would have sufficed."

"As heir of Rodney, that sum would have been your allowance from my estate. You are no longer heir of Rodney. What is your income?"

"I have only my little farm in Perthshire. You advised me to lease it. I did so, for one hundred and eighty pounds a year."

"And you ask me for Innergrey and a thousand pounds!"

"In order that I may support your daughter properly, sir."

"I can support my daughter on less money, sir."

You shall not use my daughter to force a shilling from me. I have told you what I will do if Bertha wishes to become your wife. I will add nothing to it."

"Then I relinquish my claim upon her hand. I think, however, you ought to reimburse me for the expense you have put to me, and which I can ill afford."

"Explain yourself."

"I sold two valuable horses to provide the clothing, etc., necessary to my stay in Rodney. At home, my kilts on the heathier, and a good stout suit for market and kirk, sufficed me. My tailor's bill in Edinburgh, my jeweler's bill for presents to your daughter, and my various personal expenses here, have left me a poor man. I think, at least, you should refund these outlays."

"Have you made out your bill against me, sir?"

"I consider, all together, that this wretched business has cost me nearly eight hundred pounds."

"I will give you a check for a thousand pounds"; and the Colonel, quite forgetting his staff, walked with a firm and rapid step to his secretary, and wrote the potent bit of paper.

"Mr. Blair," he said hotly, "our business is now completed. There are many good reasons why you should not prolong your stay at Rodney. I trust you will consider them."

"I consider your ungentlemanly behavior the best reason of all, sir. And I tell you, frankly, I would not marry your daughter if you gave me Rodney to do it."

The Colonel took not the slightest notice of the insult. He was arranging some loose papers, and he went on with the employment as if Blair were not present. Yet he was conscious of an unusual stir in the house, and

he thought he heard Scotia's voice, and was impatient to satisfy himself.

Scotia had indeed arrived, though it was twenty-four hours in advance of her promise. Mrs. Rodney cried out with delight ; she felt that Scotia's presence was precisely the element needed in the restless, unhappy house. If any one could tell what ought to be done, and then see that it was done, Scotia was that helper. She came home in Lady Yarrow's coach, having, she said, left Edinburgh very early, and posted every mile of the way.

She came in laughing, and talking, and watching with an affectation of extreme care a box, which a footman carried. "Come and see what I have brought!" she cried, as her fingers cut the strings of white ribbon which bound it ; and her fair face bent this way, to kiss her mother ; and that way, to kiss her sister. "Is it not lovely? Is it not splendid? I would get married only to wear it, Bertha ;" and the scented coverings being removed the lovely wedding garment was exposed to view.

"It is your wedding dress, Bertha ! Did you ever see such soft, exquisite satin? Such lace? Such a veil? Such darling orange blooms and lilies? And I have something else for you, dear. Wait till I open the case. Aunt Yarrow sent you these diamonds. The star is for your hair, and the ring to guard your wedding ring, and the locket for your pretty throat—Bertha ! Bertha ! Mother ! What is the matter?"

For suddenly Bertha had burst into passionate weeping, and Mrs. Rodney was regarding the treasures with a pitiful shake of her head. Then Scotia was aware that there was something unusual, strange, revolutionary in the house. In her own excitement, in the hurry

of her happy news and splendid gifts, she had noticed nothing. But her mother's silence and Bertha's sobs startled her into an unhappy intelligence.

"What is it, mother? Surely father is not ill?"

"Archibald has come back," shrieked Bertha. "And Blair is to be sent away, and my whole life ruined. Oh! Oh! What is the use of the dress now?"

"Archibald come back! Mother, is this true? Oh, how glad I am for father and you! Where has he been? When did he come? I want to see him! Do not cry, Bertha. No one will hurt Blair and you."

It was at this moment Blair entered. He had Colonel Rodney's check in his pocket, and after a slight salutation to Scotia he took Bertha's hand and led her from the room. A few rapid words from Mrs. Rodney enabled Scotia to grasp the whole position. She put the gems back in her bosom, and covered up the white wedding garment, and then said:

"Dear mother, this is such a great joy that we may well bear the little annoyances that are its shadow. Blair has some good qualities; he will not desert Bertha, and there is really no other reason why the marriage should be delayed. I hear my father coming! How quickly he walks!"

She went into the hall to meet him, and there she first saw Archibald. He was standing at the foot of the staircase, looking upward to his father. His tall, slender form was his father's form, with the added grace of youth and strength; but his face was the face of Scotia, formed in masculine beauty, sunbrowned and wind-tanned, crowned and bearded with the same beautifully colored hair.

He heard her open the door; he turned his gaze upon

her. A bright smile parted his lips. He looked inquiringly at his father, and understood in a moment his father's face. With an eager manner he advanced to meet his sister, and when he caught her eyes, and her smile, and her beaming glance of recognition and welcome, he cried out, "Yes! You are Scotia! Scotia!"

And if the Colonel had missed anything of perfect sympathy in his joy, he had it now. Scotia had no reservations. She thought of no future contingencies. She knew nothing, but that her long lost brother was before her. She took his hands, she put her arms round his neck, she called him "Brother," and "Archie." She stroked his hair, and matched it with her own; she kissed him frankly and fondly. And the young man was transfigured by her joy and love. He looked at his father and then at Scotia, and felt his heart glow with that wondrous, protecting, admiring affection, which, when it exists between brother and sister, is perhaps the strongest, the sweetest, and the most unselfish of all family ties.

Poor Bertha was having a very different interview. As yet Blair had not decided in what way he would take his revenge. He could leave Bertha to the public tongue, and to the cruelties of hope delayed, and final desertion; or he could marry her in spite of old Rodney, take her to his little farm-house, and make her taste all the humiliations and sorrows of poverty and neglect. He had such confidence in his power over the girl that he was sure he had only to make his plan. Bertha would carry out her share of it.

He led her to a sofa and sat down beside her. She tried to put off the words he was going to say, and in a hurried manner spoke of her wedding dress and the

diamonds her aunt had sent her. He listened with a dark, impatient face.

"What is the use of fine clothes, Bertha? Your father will not give us any money, and I have nothing to support a wife on."

"Will Father do nothing?"

"Two hundred pounds a year! What is that? It would not pay the servants necessary to keep Innergrey in order."

"We do not require many servants, Blair. I can do a great deal, and you could attend——"

"Bertha, I told your father I could not marry you with less than a thousand pounds a year, and he was rude beyond endurance. He has virtually requested me to leave the house. My little girl, we have no hope to cling to! Our marriage must be put off."

"For how long?"

"Are you afraid of poverty?"

"I never was poor."

"Could you milk cows, and make butter, and bake, and clean?"

"I do not know. For you, Blair, I could try to do many things."

"Listen, then! I will write regularly to you. As soon as I can rent a home, will you come to it?"

"Yes."

"Even if your father and mother forbid you?"

"How, then? Where could we be married?"

"You must run away with me. I would have the ring in my pocket, and the minister waiting, and we could be man and wife before you were missed."

"But I could have no bridemaids—and other things!"

"No."

He said the little syllable curtly, with a certain pleasure in all it denied ; and Bertha wept more and more. He took her in his arms and kissed her with many fond words and vows. He felt that he must rivet the bonds he had put on her as firmly as possible, and he really was touched in a selfish way by the pallor and wretchedness of her face, by her clinging to him, by her entreaties and sorrowful complaining. But he was not a man to bear too much of such a trying scene. In less than an hour he had left Rodney without a farewell to any one but Bertha, and his last words to her were a reminder of the address to which his personal belongings were to be sent.

Fortunately, Scotia had a presentiment—a feeling—that he was not in the house, and she went to seek her sister. She found the miserable girl weeping on the sofa where Blair had left her, and she knelt by her side, and with words of truest sympathy entreated Bertha to rely upon her love, and tell her just what she wished done.

“Send word to every one invited to the wedding that there will be no wedding.”

“Dear Bertha, are you sure?”

“Quite sure. Father will not give us one thousand pounds a year. He might have done it, I think.”

“Do you need so much, Bertha?”

“Blair does—if he marries. He said something about making a little home for me. But I hate little homes, and if I have to endure the shame of this broken-off marriage, I do not mind if I never see him again. He is a coward, Scotia! He goes away to Perthshire and leaves me—and all of us—to bear the disgrace alone.”

“There is no disgrace—to us.”

"People will talk."

"Let them talk. Bertha, dear, wash your face and come into the parlor. Father and mother are so happy, and Archibald, too. Is he not charming?"

"I think he is ugly and disagreeable. I am sure I shall never love him."

"I am very sure you will. He is our own, own brother. Blair is unworthy to buckle his shoes. Come, dear! There are plenty of good days in store for you, and some far grander lover. I would not let even the servants know you were fretting. And in a few days the Cupar girls, and lots of your dear familiar friends, will be lifting up their heel—or their tongues—against you. You will have to face them, Bertha. Yes, you must do it, dear. We will all help you. And you have a brother now. That makes a deal of difference. Archibald is not to be offended, you know. He is a possible husband. Girls with marriageable brothers have one great privilege—other girls like them, so much."

"Julia Cupar always flirted with Blair. She has a thousand pounds a year; perhaps Blair may seek her now."

"I should not wonder. Then you can ask her 'how your old shoes fit her feet?' Only be brave, Bertha, and we shall get more mirth than sorrow out of this disappointment."

"My lovely dress!"

"Yes, it is lovely. And the diamonds! Was it not kind of Aunt Yarrow? We will put the dress and the diamonds away. I am sure you will need them for a better lord. Come and show father what a brave girl he has! Show him that you think more of his joy than of your own sorrow. How pretty you are, Bertha! Come, dear, you can make father and mother

so happy, and I think you ought to tell father what Blair said, and talk over what is best to be done with him and mother. It will make all things so much easier."

Bertha had had her cry out, and she was ready for good advice. After all, it was more comfortable to suffer in company. She found her father's kiss, and her mother's whispered words of pity and encouragement very comforting. It did her good to talk over the affair, to say what she wished done, to assist in the composition of the formal note to be sent next day to all who had been invited to the wedding feast.

Evening brought Angus Bruce. The Colonel watched Scotia very closely. Her behavior was satisfactory. She was neither too cold, nor too shy, nor too friendly with the minister. They met as if they had seen each other every day. And indeed this was very nearly the case, as it regarded the past two weeks. For Scotia had been in Edinburgh for that time, though at the moment the Colonel had forgotten the circumstance. When she referred to it at the dinner table, the Colonel was a little astonished. "I have been so used to placing you in London," he said; "and I thought Lady Yarrow was going to Yarrow Bell when she left London."

"She intended doing so, Father; but as the time for the meeting of the General Assembly drew near, she grew more and more excited about it. What was to happen on the 19th of May haunted her constantly, and so we left for Edinburgh on the 15th."

"Nothing happened but what every sensible man and woman had foreseen would happen."

"Yes, but it was something to be witness to it. I would not have missed the experience for a year of ordinary life."

"But you were not in the Assembly Hall?"

"Yet we saw a great deal those in the hall did not see. I must tell you first, we rode some hours through the streets of Edinburgh the night previous to the great meeting. What crowds were in them! What earnest, solemn crowds! You would have thought the city on the verge of some tremendous calamity. And the ministers going from group to group made a very picturesque element in the scene. I saw one minister on Prince's Street standing bareheaded on a flight of steps, talking to a crowd that he moved, as ripe barley is moved by a breath of wind. His voice stirred the people like a trumpet. And Lady Yarrow said very proudly to several gentlemen who spoke to her, 'That is my adopted son.' Mrs. Bruce was too happy to speak at all."

She bowed to Bruce, and smiled with the pleasure of her recollection, and before the Colonel could make any remark continued:

"We—that is, Mrs. Bruce, Lady Yarrow, and myself—succeeded in getting our carriage near the entrance to the hall next day, and there we waited. Some said, 'The ministers will come out.' Others said, 'It is easy to talk; but when men have wives and bairns, not so easy to give up kirk and manse.' The big city was still as if it was the Sabbath; as the moments went on, you could feel the strained, anxious element in the air. I thought at last I must shriek aloud. Then there was the sound of footsteps, and Dr. Welsh and Dr. Chalmers came out; then the long, solemn, orderly procession of four hundred ministers in their gowns and bands, and over five hundred elders. A great shout welcomed them. It was taken up, and ran from street to street like thunder. Some

one among the elders cried "Hush!" and a silence as deep and sudden followed. Men lifted their hats and stood bareheaded as the noble army of Protestors passed them; and I saw that every one was weeping. We were weeping also, but none of us knew it. The gladdest smile was on Mrs. Bruce's face, and Lady Yarrow's face echoed it. At the same moment they caught sight of Mr. Bruce among the ministers, and both at the same moment cried 'There is our son! God bless him!' Mr. Bruce, how happy you must have been that day!"

This was the first description the Colonel had heard of the great event, and Mr. Bruce supplemented it with the facts already told to the elders of his kirk. The conversation was a very interesting one. It was then a living, burning question. Even Bertha forgot her private wrongs and sorrows in it—that is, she was lifted by the enthusiasm it created into a higher atmosphere than mere selfish cares could enter. Archibald understood nothing of it, but he played chess with Scotia, and tasted with the freshness of a child, and the feeling of a man, the delicious sense of home and kindred; the strength and the sweetness of his father's and his mother's love.

XV.

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

" 'Tis strange to think if we could fling aside
The mask and mantle that Love wears from pride,
How much would be we now so little guess.
The careless smile like a gay banner borne,
The laugh of merriment, the lip of scorn ;
And for a cloak what is there that can be
So difficult to pierce as gayety ? "

—*L. E. L.*

" What can we do o'er whom the un beholden
Hangs in a night wherewith we dare not cope ?
What but look sunward and with faces golden
Speak to each other softly of our hope ? "

NOTHING is so pleasant to men as to talk of the affairs of their neighbors, and plenty of people in the very best society find all amusements short-lived but that of watching the failures and faults of their friends and comparing them with their own successes and virtues. The broken-off marriage between Bertha and Blair Rodney occupied this class pleasantly for many days.

It was the more delightful to discuss because it offered points for distinct opinions. Those inclined to take Bertha's side, were sure she had refused to marry because Blair had ceased to be socially her equal. They had been told that Blair Rodney was only an ordinary Perthshire farmer, and they suddenly

discovered that they had always thought him vulgar. Those inclined to sympathize with Blair, approved of his decision in giving up a wife who had lost the power to advance him to the head of an old county family. "Bertha had no other desirable quality," they said, and many professed to understand how far Blair might indeed welcome his freedom, though it did send him back to poverty.

Through this trying ordeal Bertha carried herself with great wisdom. She did not shirk a single caller, and her calm manner allowed them no just opportunity to offer her condolence. She had her usual pleasant smile, and her dress was a combination of the fine arts. No one had any right to suppose a girl was suffering from either pain or mortification, who always looked as fresh as morning-glorys look before twelve o'clock.

With mere acquaintances she exchanged those innocent platitudes which are the loose coins of society; to the Cupar and Braithness girls—with whom she had been on terms of intimacy—she allowed herself little suggestive confidences :

"She was sorry for poor Blair Rodney, but the restoration of her dear, darling brother had made the world very different to them all. Of course it was impossible for her to marry Blair in his present position. He was very poor, and she was such a luxurious little body. Her father thought it would be a mistake for both of them to marry, and her father was always right." And on one or two occasions, she alluded with a long sigh to Sir Thomas Carr, and gave the girls to understand that her heart was with her old lover, and that she was not unhappy to be free. However, all suggestions were so cleverly and so modestly

made, that many who came to Rodney to pay off old scores of contempt found themselves unable to say a disagreeable word. Really, it is hard to snub a perfectly dressed woman, who has a sweet non-committal smile always ready, and the general public felt themselves to be almost defrauded out of a legitimate retaliation.

Indeed, the noble restraint with which Bertha carried herself during these days caused her to receive less consideration than she might otherwise have had. Those who want sympathy must demand it; Bertha made no such claim. She had a pride that stood her very well in place of stronger qualities. The Colonel, who always judged from appearances, said to his wife, he thought Bertha was glad to be rid of Blair, and he respected her for the feeling. Scotia thought her sister suffered mostly from the dread of public opinion, and she found her so well able to manage it that her sympathy appeared superfluous. Mrs. Rodney judged her daughter more justly, and it was to her, only, Bertha abandoned her well-assumed indifference. She knew all the girl's longing and heartache, her sense of wrong and insult; her weary bondage to the claims of the unfeeling, curious world; her sharp disappointment in losing husband and home, the position and hopes, which had been so nearly hers.

As for the Colonel, one side of the question seemed to him a sufficient answer to all who named the circumstance, "A son is a very different thing from a son-in-law where you have house, and land, and an ancient name to transmit." It was an incontrovertible position; and every man with a landed estate felt it to be so.

And the son, though not exactly after the Fife pat-

tern, was a very fine fellow. He managed a horse and used a gun as Turkomans can ride and shoot ; and these were accomplishments easily understood. But nothing could induce him to learn to dance. Dancing was the business of women, and he looked with astonishment and contempt on all masculine exhibitions of bobbing about and turning around. There was very little hope that the heir of Rodney would be turned into a ball-room partner.

The first event of importance which happened as a sequence to the two great events of Archibald's restoration and Blair's deposition, was a letter from Lady Yarrow. It was a generous, noble letter, ignoring everything past, rejoicing in the household joy, and refusing to see in any event consequent, the least cause for regret. It was, finally, a proposition to rent Innergrey, with all its furniture, for a term of three years. The price offered was munificent, and the Colonel was assured that the house and grounds would be kept in perfect order.

"In fact," she said, "I purpose to make it the home of my adopted son ; and I shall send there two women to look after his comfort, and a man to take charge of the garden. Whatever other help is required can be procured on the spot." She then signified her desire to assist in the building of a free kirk for Bruce and his people. She had understood the Colonel favored the views of these dissenters, and that he was willing to give a piece of land for the building of a place of worship. If so, she would give three hundred pounds to help forward the immediate labor.

This letter gave the Colonel great relief. In meeting so promptly and so extravagantly the claim of Blair Rodney for eight hundred pounds, he had

been actuated by a reckless pride which had caused him afterward much anxiety. The check for one thousand pounds represented nearly all his ready cash ; for the repairing and furnishing of Innergrey had cost far more than his original intention ; while the expenses attending Bertha's outfit and the wedding arrangements had magnified his indebtedness to an alarming extent. Lady Yarrow's offer was a godsend. He accepted it as such, with cordiality and thanks ; and it was with real delight he thought of the minister as the tenant of the dower house. Bruce's books and belongings were speedily carried there, and other arrangements grew naturally out of this one.

In the first place, it was just a pleasant walk from Rodney, and it was arranged for Archibald to study with Bruce there, under very favorable conditions. And while the Colonel was sitting watching Bruce arrange his library, they fell into conversation about the new kirk ; and a piece of land, admirably situated to accommodate three villages, was given by the Colonel for the purpose. In the mean time the large granary at Innergrey was to be fitted with benches, and used as a place of worship.

And no emotion retains long its first agitation. Life, however disarranged, soon accommodates itself to fresh conditions. In a month Archibald was as much at home as if he had grown up under Rodney roof. Bertha's disappointment—ignored from the first—was now seldom spoken of. It was a dead issue. Blair had gone out of their lives without protest, and with very little regret. No letter came from him. The Colonel never expected one, but Bertha for some weeks looked with strained and anxious eyes at every

mail. Sometimes the sense of cruel forgetfulness was too much to endure long in public. She would sew for a few minutes, every moment growing paler, and then with a pitiful smile make some trifling excuse for leaving the room. But even Bertha was forgetting, and one hot day in July she had a visitor who quite cured her.

It was Julia Cupar. She rode over to see Bertha specially, and after she had removed her habit, and was comfortably sipping a cold raspberry cream in Bertha's room, she said so.

"Bertha Rodney, I have come to tell you something that may do you good. Blair Rodney paid me a visit last night."

"I am not astonished, Julia. Is he in love with you now?"

"He is in love with my money, and he offered to marry it ;—he called it me."

"Did you accept the offer?"

"No ; and he had the bad taste to remind me that I had once given him to see he was agreeable to me."

"Oh ! but perhaps you did—just a little, Julia."

"Perhaps ; but, as I reminded him, a common farmer and the heir of Rodney were two different persons. He said, 'He was astonished at my mercenary disposition.' I said he ought to understand it, as it resembled his own. He had the further bad taste to remind me, that 'Grandfather Cupar made his money in trade'; and that the Rodneys 'were a terribly old family.' I said I heard their origin was depicted on the zodiac of Dendera. He said, 'They were as noble as they were ancient, all of them, saints or heroes.' I agreed with him. I said our blessed Saint Andrew might have married into the Rodney family without

fear of a *mesalliance*. Then he saw I was joking, and he got angry, and blurted out uncomplimentary things concerning women in general. And upon my word, Bertha, I am astonished you ever could bring yourself to think of Blair Rodney!"

"When one has a dear father, Julia, one does a great deal to please him. But Blair was different from Sir Thomas!"

"I should say so. He looked poor, and he said he was going into the army. I had a good mind to sing him a verse of one of his own favorite songs. That I did not is a proof of my natural noble nature. Do you know which I mean?" and she began to hum merrily:

"When a man is like me
A bankrupt in purse,
And in character worse,
With shocking bad clothes,
And his credit at zero,
What on earth can he hope
To become—but a hero?"

Bertha, let us talk Blair Rodney well over. That is why I came here to-day. You have suffered, I know, though you have behaved like an angel. You ought to forget the man ever lived, and the best way to pull him out of your heart by the roots is to talk him over."

So they talked Blair Rodney over till the sun went down; and when Julia Cupar turned in her saddle to say a last "good-by," Bertha Rodney was all herself again. She had quite accepted Julia's conception of life—that there was nothing worth crying about in it; and that as a general rule, life ought to mean getting all one can out of everybody.

July and August slipped away in sunshine and happy companionship. Archibald and Bruce were much together, and very often the Colonel and his two daughters walked over to Innergrey and brought both men back to supper. The *sub rosa* condition of their love troubled neither Bruce nor Scotia. It was, indeed, the occasion of much purely personal and private bliss. What so sharp as a lover's eye? Bruce could say all he wished to Scotia, and Scotia answer him, and yet both escape the espionage of Bertha's innocent-looking orbs. And true love never yet wanted spoken words to translate itself. It has subtler and sweeter language. Bertha could not discover the real position of Scotia and Bruce—the Colonel did not trouble himself about what was not apparent.

Toward the end of September there came another change, consequent on Archibald's return. It was found that the climate was telling severely on one used to the dry, arid heat of Central Asia. Warmer sunshine was imperative, and, as European travel was intended to form part of his education, the Colonel decided to go with his son to France and Italy until the spring. As a tutor was to accompany Archibald, Mrs. Rodney could see no reason in the Colonel expatriating himself; but the two men had become inseparable. The son clung to his father; the father would not be parted from his son.

Arrangements for this journey had to be somewhat hurriedly made, and it did not seem the right time, either to Scotia or Bruce, for pressing their love and future upon the Colonel's attention. Indeed, the father's plea for one year's silence on the subject, and Bruce's acceptance of the condition, was a bond hardly broken by the lapse of the marriage that was then

under contract. In fact, Colonel Rodney was so occupied with the training of his son, he entered into this subject with such enthusiasm, he considered it of such vital, preponderating importance, that he was not prepared to consider properly any other subject.

Yet neither did he quite forget. The very reticence of Bruce, the pleasant interest of Scotia in his journey and all concerning it touched and pleased him. The night before his departure he went alone to Innergrey. It was dusk when he left Rodney. Callers had detained him to the last moment, but he had made a determination, and he disliked to be disappointed. Scotia wished to go with him. He declined her offer. He had a word or two to say to the minister, he said. He would ride there and back in half an hour.

He left the carriage at the lower gate. He wished to consider his words as he walked slowly through the quiet garden. At the house no one was visible. The work of the day was done, the servants were doubtless eating their supper in the kitchen. But the main door was open, and he went into a parlor. The book Bruce had been reading lay upon a table by the raised window. His hat was beside it. The gray light, the handsome, comfortable room were restful and inviting. Bruce could not be far away—his hat answered for his presence.

So the Colonel sat down to wait for him. Then through the stillness there came a sound that never can be mistaken—the sound of some one praying. The low, pleading accents penetrated the house. When a man speaks to God, there is something in his voice nothing on earth can counterfeit. The Colonel bowed his head in his hands and sat still. He soon heard a slow footfall upon the stairs, and Bruce came

into the room. In the dim light, with the influence of his solemn communion around him, he made almost a supernatural impresssion. His slight, black-clothed figure was but a darker shadow ; but on his pale, rapt face there was a light,

A light that never was on sea nor land.

He was surprised to see the Colonel, and it required an effort to express himself. Indeed, it was some moments ere he could seem interested and enter into conversation. But Rodney was a good man ; he understood the mood and waited.

"I am going away in the morning, Mr. Bruce. I shall not return until spring. I thought you would have come over to Rodney House to-night."

"I knew there must be many things to do at the last. We said 'good-by' yesterday."

"I have still something to say. I feel very anxious. It is easy to leave home, but however short a visit may be, there is a change when we return. If I never return, what can I expect from your friendship?"

"Everything you wish."

"You love Scotia?"

"You know I do."

"I leave Scotia, and Scotia's mother and sister in your care. See them every day, if possible. Women need many things that paid service cannot do for them. The journey that is a pleasure to my son is a great trial to me. The old should stay at home."

"Why go? You have procured a good tutor."

"I cannot let Archie leave me. The tutor is a stranger. It is my duty to watch Archie ; he is but a child in our ways."

"You go first to southern France?"

"Yes. The doctors say we shall have a sunny, warm climate there; but I shall long for the glints and glooms of rainy, blowy Fife. I keep saying already:

The sun rises bright in France, and fair sets he;

But he has tint the blythe blink he had in my ain countree."

"You go to Rome about the New Year, Mrs. Rodney told me."

"Just so. Mr. Bruce, I tremble when I think of the journey. Yet I feel it a duty not to be put aside. Oh, if one might only see the end from the beginning!"

"My friend, it is better to say

I do not ask to see

The distant scene; one step, enough for me!"

"Thank you, it is enough."

So the men parted without more words, but with the greatest trust in each other.

It was not long ere Rodney House arranged itself to its new conditions. The quick approach of winter aided the quiet and seclusion which fell upon the lately gay household. The Cupars, the Braithness family, and several others of the near neighbors to Rodney went to Edinburgh or London for the season. Bertha was glad of any excuse to remain in seclusion for a little. Scotia found, in her daily walks, and in the society of Angus, all she desired to brighten her present life. Mrs. Rodney watched the mails for her husband's letters more anxiously than a maiden for her lover's. Her heart was full of plans and dreams for her children's future. She had already forgotten the failure of those built upon Blair Rodney. And

after Julia Cupar's confession, even Bertha's remembrance had in it neither hope nor respect. It was a point of honor and kindness with all the household to make Blair Rodney as if he had never been.

Scotia's engagement to Angus Bruce, if understood by Mrs. Rodney, was not alluded to. It might be a kindly delicacy toward Bertha which caused her reticence. An engaged daughter has in her home privileges and considerations no one cared to make obvious to Bertha. The subject of marriage was a generally ignored one. Callers were cleverly led away from it, and if Lady Yarrow described any wedding in her letters, Scotia read everything aloud but that description.

It was not possible, however, to keep Bertha happy by any such precautions. A lover would have been much more to the purpose. Bertha missed greatly that closely personal happiness which springs from a companionship no other being has a right to invade. She soon began to consider the minister as a suitable person to take Blair's place. Indeed, he appeared to her as an almost natural successor.

He was occupying the home prepared for her. He must remember this fact many a time as he sat alone in its comfort and beauty. She had planned that comfort and beauty, and watched its growth to perfection. All the details of the house and garden declared her neat, dainty, methodical tastes. If Angus Bruce had any sense of justice, Bertha was sure he must sooner or later recognize her claim.

And when a girl reasons with herself, for herself, her wishes are very likely to be the only conclusions she reaches. Bertha wished to be mistress of Innergrey, and she felt that she ought to be there. The

house had been given for her use ; it had been furnished for her as she desired ; she soon taught herself to believe that she had a right in it which Bruce could not be oblivious to. From this position to Bruce personally was an easy deduction. She began sentimentally to consider him as her first love. And she had represented Blair so often to strangers as the husband of her father's selection, that she had finally come to believe herself the victim of the family interests. Left entirely free, she was certain that her choice would have fallen upon Angus Bruce. The quiet house and monotonous life provoked such dreams and such unreal hopes, and the absence of all opposing elements led her to feel that she had but to make some plan, and then carry it out to the end she wished.

It was evident, even to her self-satisfied estimate, that Bruce paid Scotia much attention. She saw that if Scotia went to walk she was as sure to meet Bruce as if the meeting had been arranged. But Scotia had a very clear idea of Bruce's general movements ; there were not many walks available in winter weather ; and moreover, it was very likely if she took walks Angus would also make her his companion. She could easily have put this likelihood to the test, but she preferred to keep the comfort of its indecision.

Neither could she avoid noticing that between Scotia and Angus there was that manner of confidence and unrestraint which is the result of perfect understanding. But even if there was an engagement, engagements were not marriages, as she herself well knew. And she had no definite reason to suppose there was an engagement. Scotia had told her nothing of the kind. It had not been acknowledged in the

family. She had, therefore, every right to suppose Angus Bruce to be free as herself, every right to induce him to take the step so evidently his duty, and make her mistress of her own house. She felt, also, that she could love Angus as she had never loved Blair. And then, the joy and triumph there would be in showing Blair that she had gone to Innergrey after all ! The idea grew in her little selfish mind every hour. It took possession of her. She was determined to make it succeed.

The failure of her previous matrimonial plans taught her no good lesson. That they had been unsuccessful was no fault of hers. Indeed, she reminded herself that if her marriage to Blair Rodney had taken place—as she desired—at the New Year, Innergrey and the annual income of a thousand pounds would have been theirs ; and the return of Archibald could not have affected her settlement so far.

“ This time I shall keep my own counsel and carry out my own ideas,” was her private decision. “ If I tell mother, or Scotia, they will immediately begin to consider how my plans will affect the whole family. I am determined to marry Angus Bruce, and I will hesitate at nothing that promises me success. Suppose I have to disappoint Scotia a little ! I have been disappointed ! Scotia is good-natured ; she will forgive me as soon as I say I am sorry. And if Angus finds me out, I will tell him I did whatever I may have to do, because I was so much in love with him. He would be a brute not to accept that apology.”

As yet she had no plan which promised success. But she was in that receptive mood for evil which germinates evil ; and so brought herself into sympathetic relation with some power whose foresight and in-

telligence in sin was beyond mortal capacity. This coadjutor whom she called to herself was not long in finding out a way. And when such influences are at work, there is often a circumstantial preparation and assistance that appears miraculous. So that when a mortal man or woman is planning wickedness, and a singular success attends their movements, they may well pause and pray to be delivered from the dread guilt of premeditated sin, and the after-wages of its success.

The very day after she had abandoned all reservations and regrets, a series of events began to happen which fitted themselves exactly to the animus of her desires. It was a beautiful day in March ; a little frosty, but the sky was blue, and the robins hopped about the bare shrubs as merrily as if it was already spring. The ground had a crisp feeling that made walking delightful, and Scotia, accompanied by Angus, left Rodney after lunch for a long afternoon walk.

Scotia looked lovely in her furs and winter wraps, and her hands folded in her muff as she walked by Bruce's side gave her an independent air which was charming. The robins, whom she constantly fed, fluttered around ; admiring her in little songs of delight that had an intelligible significance, very near to articulation ; and Scotia irritated Angus first, by keeping him waiting while she went back for crumbs, and scattered them for the pretty brown, red-breasted pets. He felt as if they had been put before him, their pleasure considered first, and he was not mollified by her arch smile in his face, nor yet by her apology :

" These, Angus, are the summer birds," she said,

That ever in the haunch of winter sing.

They are never tired, and they are never terrified; and no bird of prey will touch them. If I had not been a woman, I should like to have been a robin red-breast."

Bruce heard her innocent prattle almost with anger. He was in one of those moods when all trifling had a childish, unreasonable meaning. He had just come from the preparation of his sermons—he had been dealing with the subject of immortal souls, and their tremendous travail and destiny; and how could he patiently hear the woman, who was to be his wife, almost desiring to be a bird without an immortal soul?

He said so in a kind and yet in an irritating manner, for words do not always lose the spirit of their origin in soft speech; and Scotia answered him with the decision which springs from positive predelictions or pet theories.

"How do you know, Angus, that birds have no souls? Who has said so? Before the flood, birds were classed as clean and unclean; and the omens of the dove and the raven looked for. Elijah was saved by the ministry of the birds. Ephrem and Syrian says, 'Where birds are, there angels are.' Birds are the powers of the air; nowhere can we get away from them, and doubtless they possess a great knowledge of human affairs. There are good birds and bad birds, just as there are good and bad men. Birds know many things we do not know. They would tell us them if we had intelligence enough to understand."

Angus laughed, but it was not a pleasant laugh.

"You have said these things before," he answered. "But, Scotia, you cannot mean to say that birds are prophets; that they have intelligence?"

"I think they are as likely to be prophets as men are. The great thinkers of the ancient world believed in them. We have learned many human languages and perhaps forgotten some forms of communication, far nearer to the speech of heaven. Are you wiser than Sophocles, who makes *Cædipus* say, 'If you have received any information from the prophetic birds, divulge it to me'; than Aristophanes, who makes one congratulate himself because 'nobody knows of his treasure, except, indeed, some bird?' Many a thought, many a presentiment, many a conviction about our own affairs comes to us, and we know not how. Perhaps when we say 'a little bird told me,' we are not wrong."

"I think, Scotia, that as a minister of a holy God, I may lawfully claim to have more wisdom than two pagan play-writers. And I do not like this way you have of arguing and quoting from those old pagans."

"Saint Paul often quotes from the same authorities."

She was now a little offended, and she accused Saint Paul with the air of one who is glad to bring a mutual friend into like condemnation.

"You know too much, and too little, Scotia. That is the fault with all clever women."

"Indeed, I have seen clever men of the same kind."

Then they walked on in silence, until they came to the old manse. Adam was leaning on the garden gate. Adam, out of simple contradiction to the village in general, and to Grizel in particular, had, when the hour for decision came, decided to remain with the Established Kirk. Angus stopped and spoke to him:

"How are you, Adam?"

"I might be waur, sir. I might be dying, as they say the minister at Pittenleekie is."

“Dr. Buchan dying?”

“’Tis said sae. I dinna think it. He was aye preaching aboot heaven, but he’ll never gae to heaven, sae lang as he can get stopping at Pittenleekie.”

Angus went forward without answering him, and the old man laughed softly to himself: “I gied him a poke in his ain conscience, I’ll warrant! Sae setten up as these young ministers are! And the laird’s daughter linking beside him—Rodney’s eldest lass, and nae less to suit his reverence! I did weel, to gie him a salt word.”

Perhaps Angus felt the ill-nature that pursued him. People with souls do feel much that has no voice. He was angry in his heart, and said, “Adam examines every one’s title to heaven but his own.”

Scotia pondered the words a few minutes, and then answered, “Heaven! We all say the word glibly enough. Who knows anything about it? Will it be at all like what we imagine?”

For still the doubt comes back—can God provide
For the large heart of man what shall not pall?
Nor through eternal ages’ endless tide
On weary spirits fall?

You need not look angry, Angus; it is an archbishop asks the question.”

“Be fair, Scotia, and give the rest—

These make him say, If God has so arrayed
A fading world, that quickly passes by;
Such rich provision of delight has made
For every human eye.

What shall the eyes that wait for Him survey?
When His own presence gloriously appears,
In worlds that were not founded for a day,
But for eternal years?

We know that 'we shall be satisfied.' We have the glorious promises of the Apocalypse—the multitude no man can number singing the new song—the Seraphim who continually do cry 'Holy ! Holy ! Holy ! Lord God of Sabaoth !' "

His face was rapt and solemn, and usually it would have silenced Scotia, but she was possibly under an influence beyond her knowledge and control. A spirit of contradiction, a positive pleasure in seeing how far she could oppose Angus, actuated her, and she demurred at once to his decision.

"That is not my conception of heaven, Angus. I think it is a place where those we love will always be with us and never misconceive us—a place of glorious work to do and of adequate faculties to do it. A world of solved problems, of realized ideals, of new ideas ; a place where we shall learn the secrets of space, the wonders of the stars, and of the regions beyond the stars ; a book of knowledge with eternal leaves, and unbounded faculties to read and understand it—

For it is past belief that Christ hath died,
Only that we unending psalms may sing :
That all the gain Death's awful curtains hide
Is this eternity of anthemning."

"Scotia, you presume very far. We have no authority for your imaginations. As my promised wife, I have a right to expect you to agree with me. I do expect it. I may as well tell you that I felt very keenly your remarks about my prayer the other night."

"Your prayer, Angus ?"

"Yes. If you remember, we had been talking, before the exercise, of those Mohammedan colleges

in which Archibald had been educated, and I naturally prayed for the extinction of the creed of the False Prophet. Have you forgotten what comment you made on my prayer?"

"No, for it was not mere comment. It was a fixed opinion. I do think you could find better subjects for prayer than the overthrow of the creeds of five-sixths of the human race. Are we the best judges of times and seasons? Is Calvinism so exquisite an embodiment of truth that the whole world should be miraculously converted to it? The essence of prayer, as I understand it, is thy will be done."

"Scotia, I know my duty. What do you mean by this evident desire to anger me? Are you weary of our engagement?"

"If you think so."

"You try to make me think so."

"Evidently it is easy work."

"I do not understand you."

"Nor I you. I will return home."

She walked rapidly; too rapidly for much conversation. Neither, however, made any attempt toward it. In silence they retraced their steps; and the sun shone and the birds sang in vain as far as they were concerned. As they passed through the park they saw a hare which had torn its front paws from a trap in order to escape. It was in great misery. Scotia stopped, folded the wounds in her handkerchief, and then lifted the poor suffering creature in her arms. Bruce walked slowly forward, and finally waited for her. He made no comment on the hare, and did not offer to relieve her of her trembling burden. He was feeling, with a great sense of wrong, that Scotia had

forgotten his suffering in that of the perishing, dumb animal.

When they reached the door, Bertha came to meet them. She was dressed in a cherry-colored cashmere. She had white lace near her throat, and ruffles of white lace round her pretty wrists. She had cherry ribbons in her black hair. She was very attractive, and she took Bruce's hand and held it, while she offered Scotia a letter.

"You naughty girl!" she said. "Why did you not tell us that Captain Forbes is coming? We should never have known if aunt had not marked her letter 'Haste!' and so mother thought it best to open it. He will be here in an hour. You have just time to dress."

Scotia glanced at the letter, and the news happened to fit her mood. She felt glad to annoy Angus. It would do him no harm to feel a little uncertainty about her. Jealousy is the accepted punishment all women naturally apply to recalcitrant lovers. Scotia affected to be delighted with the news. She said she would make ready for the captain as soon as she had attended to the wounded hare; and she went off without a word to Angus, while Bertha, who was still holding his hand, said:

"Come in, Mr. Bruce. Mother will expect you to dinner, and I shall have to depend upon your kindness to-night. Of course, Scotia will have neither eyes nor ears for any one but 'Jamie Forbes.'"

"Why 'of course,' Miss Bertha."

"Oh, you know—you know—really, I have no authority to say anything. Stay, and see for yourself."

But Bruce lifted his hat and turned homeward. He was too indignant for speech. His heart was in a

blaze of angry suspicion. He was as miserable as Scotia was, and her tears were dropping heavily upon the hare's feet as she held the creature for the hostler to attend to. He thought she was weeping for the suffering animal ; she knew that she was weeping for her lover's wounded heart.

XVI.

LOVE'S REASON IS WITHOUT REASON.

"How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
Makes deeds ill done."

"How many fond fools serve mad jealousy?"

"He that but fears the thing he would not know,
Hath by instinct knowledge from others' eyes,
That which he feared is chained."

"Jealousy is the green ey'd monster which doth make
The meat it feeds on."

—*Shakespeare.*

THE next morning was cold and raw, the air was full of coming rain, the east wind searching and bitter. But as Bruce was going through the village, he saw Sootia and Captain Forres riding together. The captain wore his military cloak, Scotia her warmest habit. Bruce was near the old manse gate, and he had a momentary temptation to call on Adam and Grizel, and so escape the painful meeting. He gave it no attention, and walked steadily forward. But while he was at least one hundred yards distant, the riders stopped at the cottage of John Latham, and Captain Forres dismounted and entered it. Scotia, followed by the groom, then turned backward to Rodney House.

Bruce was astonished. He could not imagine why Captain Forres had called at the Latham cottage.

Sarah Latham was a dressmaker, her husband an idle ne'er-do-weel, whom she in the main supported. One thing, however, was clear to Bruce—that there was a friendship between Scotia and Captain Forbes so intimate as to dispense with the ordinary ceremonies of mere acquaintanceship. They rode slowly, in spite of the cold and damp; Forbes was talking earnestly, and Scotia listening with interest and pleasure. When Forbes dismounted at Latham's cottage, he held her hand; and there was in their parting that familiar air which carries confirmation of some close personal understanding—an air which deeply offended Bruce.

In the afternoon he went to Rodney. He saw no one but Bertha. She said her mother had been ailing for some days, and had been finally compelled to send for the doctor. She was in her room and Scotia was with her. He sent a message to Mrs. Rodney, and then sat half an hour with Bertha. He thought Scotia would come to him, but she did not, and Bertha at last said, "I suppose Scotia is fretting a little at the shortness of Captain Forbes's visit. He had to go to Monteith to-day, and will not be back until next Friday."

"I saw him go into Sarah Latham's—it seemed strange."

"Not at all. John Latham was in Captain Forbes's company, and acted as his attendant while there. I suppose you have heard Sarah bought her husband off. Captain Forbes wanted a valet to go with him to Monteith, and I am sure he called at Latham's to hire John."

"Very likely. Then Captain Forbes returns next Friday?"

"Yes, for a flying visit. He is such a favorite with Aunt Yarrow. I believe she has promised him great things if he marries Scotia."

"If he marries Scotia?" said Bruce indignantly.

Bertha laughed. "You know, Mr. Bruce, a great many people may talk of marrying Scotia. It is a long way between saying and doing the thing. Scotia is as cross as crossed sticks this afternoon, but if you wish to see her I will go to mother, and send her to you."

"Not on any account, Miss Bertha. It is Saturday. I will not wait longer."

This day indicated the whole of the next week, which was a completely wretched one. Scotia was at the Sabbath service, but Bruce did not permit himself to look at her. On Monday she did not appear when he called. She had determined not to appear until he asked to see her. Really, Bruce did not think of the necessity. His knowledge of women, and of the small formalities they require, was not great. It did not enter his mind that Scotia was waiting for him to take the first step toward an explanation. Perhaps if it had done so, he might have been equally remiss; for he thought Scotia had wantonly hurt his feelings, and that it was her duty to express sorrow for the cruel, tantalizing despotism which led her to such acts. He was waiting to be gracious and to forgive her. He was anxious and longing to do so; but if she would not come where he was, how could he let her see his desire.

So the mournful week passed. During it Mrs. Rodney's illness developed into a slow, intermittent fever, which confined her to her bed, and required the constant care and society of one of her daughters.

Rodney House was exceedingly quiet ; an air of depression filled its rooms, although the garden and park were already beautiful with the verdure and promise of an early spring. Bruce went to Rodney House every day. Twice he left the saddle and sat an hour in the parlor, hoping vainly that Scotia would come and speak to him.

He did not know that every day Scotia said to Bertha, " Did Angus Bruce ask to see me ? " He did not know that Bertha had taken special care to repeat, with its most aggravating accent, Bruce's reply to her solitary proposal to call Scotia : " He said, when I offered to call you, ' Not on any account.' He never named you. He asked about mother. He said I was looking very weary. He asked when my father was coming. He made such and such comments—but he never asked for you. He never once named you."

Such was the tenor of all Bertha's reporting, and Scotia began to feel every fresh visit an impertinence. Did he come to Rodney to show her that he was indifferent ? that he would make the inquiries he promised her father to make, irrespective of her presence or absence ? She thought there was bravado in these daily visits, which roused in her heart a bitter anger. She believed them to be made solely to wound her. She was quite aware she had been provoking ; she was ready to admit the fact if Bruce would give her an opportunity. But he must ask to see her. Her self-respect demanded so much from her.

The whole week had been filled with such cross purposes as far as Angus was concerned. Every trivial event worked with Bertha to separate them, and she was quite ready now to carry out to its full end the plan she had made for that purpose. It was

almost ready-made for her. She could not have conceived of anything so apropos as the plain events ordered for her hand.

It came through the friendship of Scotia and Captain Forbes. Forbes was one of those people with whom familiarity is perfectly natural and innocent. From the first hour of their acquaintance, Scotia and Jamie Forbes had been familiar. Men inclined to slop over have generally a natural tact in discovering loyal natures. Forbes had made Scotia his confidant long before she had left London. She knew that he was in love with Flora Monteith, and that he had great hopes of winning her. The girl was not only a beauty, she was an heiress ; and her Scottish home was with her uncle at Monteith Castle, twenty miles north of Rodney.

In this love affair Scotia had been his friend and helper. They had talked of the matter with the most complete confidence. They talked also, with the same confidence, of Lady Yarrow's desire to marry them to each other. Lady Yarrow had been very kind to Forbes ; he did not wish to offend her ; and he thought if he could win Flora Monteith, she would accept such a prudent, wealthy marriage as a set-off against all his previous failures. Many confidences grew out of these circumstances, perfectly innocent, and not necessary to specify.

When Forbes left Scotia at Latham's cottage, though he held her hand, he was talking of Flora Monteith ; and he was really so absorbed in this subject, that, having removed his cloak while he arranged for Latham's service, he left it lying on the table. He had galloped five miles ere he discovered his loss ; then he reflected that Latham would follow in a few hours, and doubtless bring the cloak with him.

But Sarah Latham, who knew her husband's failing, was afraid he might be tempted to sell it for liquor, and she hid the cloak in her chest, and sent word to Rodney House of its whereabouts. The note happened to fall into Bertha's hands. It was like the opening of a door; it was like the lifting of a weapon to her. She stood still with flushing cheeks, holding the soiled bit of paper, and considering, and seeing clearly what a power she had at her disposal. She heard Scotia coming. She dropped the note into the fire. In the same moment, she resolved to accept the suggestions some one had made through it.

"Scotia, I feel the need of a walk so much. Are you able to stay with mother until noon?"

"Yes. I think a walk will do you good. Bertha, if you meet Angus Bruce, try and say a reconciling word. You are so clever. Let him know he ought to seek an interview. If he were ever so unkind, it would be better than this silence and apparent indifference."

Her face was piteous, white, and sad, and Bertha kissed her, and made the kiss seem a thousand promises. But as she walked to Sarah Latham's, she told herself that she was really doing Scotia a service in effectually separating her from Angus. She would then doubtless marry Captain Forres, and please Lady Yarrow, and every one else. Oh, the wicked never yet wanted an excuse for their wickedness!

Sarah had done a great deal of sewing for Bertha before her marriage was broken off; she had been accustomed to see her almost every day. She had regarded her as an almost sure livelihood. She had got used to associating Bertha Rodney and ready money together. Therefore, when Bertha said, "Sarah,

you can do something important for the house of Rodney, and you will be well paid for it"; Sarah was quite ready to listen and assent.

"In the first place, Sarah, you must not let John go to Monteith. I have something for him to do here. Secondly, you must not tell any one about Captain Forres's cloak."

"It is in my box, Miss Bertha. I wouldn't let John know for anything. He'd sell it for a shilling, and get drunk."

"Have you heard about Miss Rodney and the minister?"

"I have heard they are engaged to be married."

"It is killing my poor mother; she is in bed now about it. When father knows, I dare not think what will be the result. And it is only contradiction in Scotia. She ought to marry Captain Forres. Now I am going to try and save trouble for all of us, and make Scotia do good to herself. Will you help me to break up the affair with the minister?"

"I'm sure I'll do anything I can, Miss Bertha."

"You once told me that you wished to go to New York with John. How much money do you want?"

"Oh, Miss, at least thirty-five pounds."

"I will give you thirty if you do as I wish. You can manage John, I suppose?"

"For a bottle of whisky, John will do any earthly thing."

"It is nothing wrong, Sarah. It is the simplest and most innocent action. Captain Forres will be here Friday. You know the fir plantation which is entered by a stile from the park?"

"Very well, Miss."

"The minister, coming from Rodney House, passes that stile every night."

"Just before dark, Miss, I should say."

"I will send you a parcel containing a suit of Miss Rodney's, her cloak and bonnet, and one of her gloves. You have precisely her figure, and you must wear the suit. You can hide all your hair under the bonnet, and you had better veil your face. John is to wear the captain's cloak. When you see the minister coming, sit a few minutes on the stile. John must have his arm around you; in short, you must act as lovers parting would act. As the minister comes closer, go into the wood, and so gradually out of his sight. But be sure to leave on the stile—in your hurry—Miss Rodney's gray cloak; and drop the glove there, also. You understand?"

"Very well, John will be glad to earn money so easy; and, dear me, Miss, to get away to a new place, and a new life, is fair salvation for us both!"

"Of course, you know, this is not to be spoken of to any one. And you had better send back the suit and bonnet as soon as possible."

"I will be mumm as the grave—and I'll answer for John, too."

"If you manage it, I will give you thirty sovereigns as soon you are ready to go. But you must talk a little about the move to New York. You must sell your furniture, and contrive to give the impression that Captain Forres gave John the money. A great many people, I dare say, saw him at your cottage."

"Indeed, Miss, we will do all you want. John is under my thumb, and dying to get away from here. If you will send the things, and give the thirty sovereigns, I will do all the rest. I have a woman's heart

in me; and I know a woman's ways as well as any fine lady."

"You had better send John to Rodney for the clothing. Tell him to say to the servants, 'he has come for Miss Bertha's dresses to alter.'"

Then Bertha put a few shillings into the woman's hand and went home. She was not much troubled. Even if the masquerading was found out, she could turn it into a joke, and say she thought the minister deserved to be teased a little. He had been so unreasonable with Scotia. She knew just how to get out of the affair. And she really did think it would be a fine bit of pleasantry, whether successful or unsuccessful.

It was more successful from the very dawn of Friday than she had dared to hope. In the first place, Captain Forres arrived very early in the day, and stayed only a few hours. When Angus paid his daily visit, Forres was gone. Bertha met the minister with a little air of flurry.

"Come in, Mr. Bruce; though indeed I cannot ask you to stay, because mother is alone, and she is worse to-night."

"I suppose you have company? Can I do anything for you?"

"We have no company; Captain Forres left soon after luncheon. Rodney is not a cheerful place to stay now! He said he should go as far as Latham's, and then to Cupar House. He will remain over Sabbath with Gilchrist, who is keeping bachelor's hall at present. Scotia went for a walk about an hour ago. I dare say you will meet her in the park. Had you not better make up your quarrel?"

He thought she was in earnest, and looked grate-

fully at the girl, whose impatience to return to her sick mother he perceived and respected. He had seldom felt kinder to Bertha. He smiled on her in a way that made her blush and tingle with pleasure; and then with some new hope in his heart turned homeward. He loitered a little as he went. The gloaming was so exquisite, the spring so entrancing. The tiny leaves were bursting on the brushwood, the birds were everywhere in their nuptial plumage, singing like bridegrooms. The winter was really behind; the glory of spring just at hand. There was a half-moon also—a tender, mystical-looking moon, predisposing the happiest heart to a still happier melancholy.

Bertha, having dismissed Angus Bruce, lay down on the sofa and bound a wet kerchief round her brow. She expected Scotia to be impatient for a report of every word, and within half an hour her expectations were realized. With a tired, miserable face she opened the parlor door and looked in:

“Is your head worse, Bertha?”

“It is almost intolerable. Angus Bruce was here.”

“I heard him. What did he say?”

“The usual things—‘Sorry for mother,’ etc. ‘Had Captain Forres returned?’ etc. I told him the captain had been, and gone.”

“Did he name me?”

“Not once.”

“You are not able, I suppose, to come and sit with mother a little?”

“I feel sleepy. If I can sleep an hour, I shall be better. Then I will stay with her until midnight.”

“Very well, dear. Can I do anything for you?”

"Only stay with mother, and let me sleep. I feel as if I must forget I live for one hour."

Scotia closed the door and went softly upstairs, step by step, feeling each step an effort. "I wonder if I have fever also?" she queried. "I do not seem able to live. Oh, Angus! Angus!"

Angus was at that moment scanning every walk and vista in the park. Bertha's words had made him impatient to see Scotia; he felt that if he could only meet her there, alone with nature, all might easily be put right. Never had she been so sweet to his memory. His eyes were aching to see her; his ears longed for her voice. To catch her smile—to clasp her hand—to be close to her—to feel the perfume of her garments! Oh, how he wearied and hungered for these delights!

A sudden, damp sweetness filled the air; he knew it was wood violets; he stopped and gathered some; and when he lifted his eyes he saw Scotia and Captain Forbes come out of the fir plantation, and stroll toward the stile. He looked at them as if he were dreaming. He remembered that Bertha told him Forbes had gone two hours previously to the village and to Cupar House; and that Scotia was walking in the park. Then there had been an assignation. In order to meet this man alone, Scotia had condescended to deception and equivocation.

Anger blew hard at the lamp of his love. His heart was hot; he felt that it was no sin to be in a passion. He was naturally a man of mettle and high spirit, and every natural feeling was aflame. He kept his gaze upon the lovers—for lovers they undoubtedly were. They sat down on the broad topmost step, and Forbes put his arm around Scotia. She leaned against his

shoulder, and he kissed her repeatedly ; yes, and finally Scotia lifted her head and kissed Forres.

In the few moments during which he was approaching the stile, he saw that Scotia gave to Forres tokens of affection she had never permitted herself to give him. When he was within fifty yards of the lovers, they suddenly became aware of his presence. Forres passed over the stile into the wood ; Scotia went with him. Angus neither delaying, nor yet hurrying, went direct to the place on which they had been sitting. Scotia's gray winsey cloak lay upon the stile, and her right hand glove was on the turf beneath. He sat down where they had been sitting, his first impulse being to wait until the night forced them from the dampness and darkness of the firs. He saw the couple at intervals, as they passed along the winding path ; saw them so plainly that he fully recognized the dress Scotia wore as one he particularly admired—a green cloth pelisse, trimmed with minever. The borders of white fur were unique ; he knew of no other garment like it. Forres wore his military cloak ; he remembered the garment distinctly. There had been no shadow of doubt when he first saw them together ; while he sat upon the stile he verified every particular.

Oh, if he had been mistaken in all else, he told himself, he never could have doubted the tall, graceful figure of the girl who was so false to him ! And perhaps the keenest pang of all was given by the demonstrative affection Scotia showed this soldier. With him she had always been so shy and chary of every favor ; very seldom, indeed, had she permitted him to touch her lips. He had thought this reserve a chastity pure as heaven ; it gave him a mortal pain to see Scotia set it aside with a more favored lover.

A passionate contempt for the inconstancy and untruthfulness of all women rose like a sudden storm in his soul. Wave after wave of it went over him. He forgot everything in its turbulence for a little while ; then he perceived that it had grown dark, and he was still alone. He felt that he need wait no longer. Scotia had seen him, and gone home by the other side of the wood. That she had done so was another proof of her faithlessness, for it compelled her to take a walk of three miles ; and she had evidently preferred the walk to the shame of meeting him. He lifted the cloak, put the glove in his pocket, and walked rapidly to Innergrey.

The house and the place had become during this hour hateful to him. He recalled Bertha's face, and was sure she was pitying, even while she advised him. The Colonel, Mrs. Rodney, the new heir, all the personalities and events connected with his stay in Rodney, sunk low in his estimation ; he thought only of the faults and the disagreeableness of each and all. Even the patronage of Lady Yarrow oppressed him. He wished his mother had trusted to God and herself. Yet in this chaos of wounded and depreciated fortune, he remembered his mother as the one sure and certain comfort ; and after a long, impotent struggle with his sick heart, he opened it to her ; told her everything ; his difference with Scotia's opinions, their coldness in consequence, Scotia's subsequent refusal to see or speak to him, Captain Forres's visit, and its shipwrecking consequences, as far as his love-life was concerned.

This confession did him some good, but he could not sleep, and he spent the night in the vain nursing of his wrong, and in restless plans for a future which

must put entirely behind him all memories of the past and present. Toward morning his emotions induced a severe nervous headache. He had been watching for the morning impatiently, desiring the hour in which he could insist upon an interview with his false love ; but when it came he was bound fast by almost intolerable physical pain. Light, movement, a foot-fall, a whisper intensified his suffering, and the morrow was the Sabbath ! What if he was not able to perform his duties ! He would be compelled to blame himself for giving place to such fierce emotions, and for the neglect of the conditions necessary for health—one of those sins against the body always inexorably punished.

He lay prostrate all day. Both Scotia and Bertha wondered at his absence ; Bertha was nervous and curious ; Scotia hopeless and miserable. In the afternoon Sarah Latham brought back Scotia's dress and bonnet. She called them "Bertha's dresses," and Bertha took her to her room, and heard what perfect success had crowned her evil plan. But she found out that consummated evil has its pains and penalties. Sarah's tone had changed. She was eager for the wage she had won, and Bertha felt compelled to give her it. Bertha was naturally accumulative and careful, she had acquired these thirty sovereigns by planning and saving during all the time she was buying her wedding outfit. She felt now that she had paid a dear price for a very uncertain benefit. Bruce had not come in a passion as she expected he would ; either Sarah was deceiving her, or else Bruce was going to take the affair in some unusual way.

When she saw him at the Sabbath service, she was shocked at his appearance. She doubted Sarah no

longer. It was evident Bruce had been suffering. He looked "as if he had just come back from death," she said on her return home. Scotia made no remark. She, too, was ill; the doctor had just expressed his opinion that "she had the same fever as her mother." The diagnosis of sorrowful love has never been made for any pharmacopœia; it passes for fever as well as anything.

On Monday morning, a little before noon, Scotia, standing at the window, saw Angus approach the door. There was something so unusual in his manner that it arrested her attention. Bertha was reading to Mrs. Rodney. Ordinarily, Scotia would have taken the book and sent Bertha to meet Bruce. This morning she said nothing of his being there. Very soon a servant brought a written message and gave it into Scotia's hand. It was a formal, but urgent, request to see her. The tone of the note troubled her, but she was glad of the opportunity it gave. She made up her mind as she went to the parlor to be as patient and loving as her lover could desire. She felt that life without him was only a living death.

Bruce looked very ill, but the change in him was as nothing compared with the waste and pallor which fretting and confinement had produced in Scotia's appearance. It gave Angus a shock, and her wan, pitiful smile when she saw him touched his very heart of hearts. But the cloak was before his eyes; he glanced at it, and forgot every kind feeling. Scotia advanced rapidly, with her hands stretched out. "My dear Angus!" she cried softly. "Oh, my dear Angus!"

"I have brought you back your cloak, Miss Rodney—and also your glove."

"My cloak and glove ! But what do you mean ?"

"Are these not yours ?"

"Yes, they are mine."

"You know, of course, that you left them at the stile by the fir plantation on Friday evening. I found them there."

She shook her head. "I have not been so far down the park for two weeks."

"Scotia ! I saw you there !"

"Angus ! You could not see me there. But if you did, what then ?"

"Only heartbreak and wrong for me ! Only the loss of love and all love promised me."

"What do you mean, Angus ?"

"I mean," he said angrily, "that I saw you and Captain Forres together there. Surely there is no need for me to say more."

"You never saw me there with Captain Forres."

"I did. You wore your green pelisse trimmed with minever. Could I mistake it ? Could I mistake you !"

"You are dreaming — or ill. Angus ! Dearest Angus !"

"Scotia Rodney, I am no longer 'dearest' to you ! I will be nothing less. Take back your promise with your cloak and glove. I will not share your heart with any man."

"Angus ! I tell you, on my honor ! you are mistaken."

"Miss Rodney, I tell you, on my honor ! you are untruthful."

"I was never near the fir wood on Friday. I was not out of the house on Friday. Come and see mother. She will tell you so."

"My own eyes have told me the truth. It was no passing glance. I watched you for some minutes. I saw Captain Forres with his arm around you. He wore his military cloak. I saw him kiss you several times. Yes, as surely as I live, I saw you kiss him. You were then among the fir trees."

"Captain Forres never, in all his life, touched my lips. I certainly never touched his."

"I saw you."

"You did not, sir."

"If you had only the grace to acknowledge your fault, I——"

"Sir! I would be dumb forever, ere I would acknowledge a fault I never committed. If you doubt me, ask Captain Forres. Ask mother. Ask Bertha. Ask the servants."

"Bertha told me that you had gone to walk in the park when I called here last Friday evening."

"Bertha could not tell you so. She knew that I was with mother. Bertha had a violent headache. Do you believe Bertha before me?"

"I believe my own eyes."

"Angus! Angus! Do not leave me in such uncertainty and misery! Angus! Angus!"

"I can have no part in a woman, however lovely and dear, who is untruthful and unfaithful. Was not one fond, loyal heart enough for you? Only light, vain women, make their sport out of many lovers."

"I am no light, vain woman. I will defend myself no more to you. I see plainly that you have determined to quarrel with me. I will spare you the pitiful shame of it."

She left the room with the words; her face was flushed with indignation; her manner haughty, and

even contemptuous. And for some time this attitude was the necessary one. She locked her room and sat down to think. Though too angry at Bruce to permit herself any explanation, she already suspected some one's treachery. And after an hour's dispassionate examination, she fixed the treachery upon Bertha. But, if it was Bertha's doing, she saw no way to explain it. She might tell her father and mother, and sufficient pressure be put upon Bertha to make her confess the truth to Angus. But Scotia knew that, even in such a strait, Bertha would contrive to give Angus the impression that her confession was an act of pity, forced from her, to exonerate her sister in his eyes.

She understood now how skillfully the trouble between herself and Bruce had been fostered ; she saw many things plainly that had only been a passing speculation to her. She was trembling with anger and the sense of wrong and injustice. The expression of her face changed. She laughed scornfully, only to prevent bitter weeping. She had brought upstairs with her the offending cloak, and she tossed it hither and thither, as her thoughts tossed her. For some hours she was afraid to see Bertha. She wondered why Bertha had done this thing ? Was it that she might suffer the same disappointment as herself ? Did she want so much to live at Innergrey ? Was she really in love with Angus ? Or was it the simple envy and selfishness of her nature ? Scotia could hardly believe in the existence of such wicked purposes ; she only felt her own inability to cope with the cruel circumstances. " Oh, if Father was at home ! " she moaned. " I cannot trouble Mother now. And there is no one to help me ! "

She remained so long in her room that finally Bertha came to see if she was sick. "Mother and I are so anxious about you," she said. Scotia impulsively opened the door and drew her sister into the room. Her grasp was so firm that Bertha said :

"You hurt me, Scotia. What are you locking the door for?"

"You have hurt me a thousand times more cruelly. I have locked the door to make you listen to me. Sit down—or stand up. I care not."

"Scotia, you are ill—you have lost your senses. Mother! Mother! Mother!"

"Be quiet. I am not going to kill you, though you deserve it. Now tell me who you got to personate me last Friday night?"

"Scotia, you have the fever—you are crazy. If you do not open the door, I will jump out of the window."

"I shall not allow you. Who were the persons representing Captain Forres and myself? You had better tell me, Bertha."

Then Bertha saw that she had come to a corner in life which she could only turn with a lie, and she said promptly—"It was the new gardener and his wife. You know he has been a soldier. Scotia, upon my honor! I did it for your sake. I thought if Angus were made jealous, he would behave better to you."

"Did I ever meddle with your affairs? What right had you to trifle with mine? You have broken my heart. You have ruined my life. Oh, I know now how easy it was for Aunt Yarrow not to speak to mother for so many years!"

"Let me go to mother. She is very sick. I think it is a great shame of you to take Aunt Yarrow's part against your own dear mother! Poor mother!"

"When father comes back, I shall tell him all. The new gardener must go. As for you, Bertha, keep out of my sight, and do not trouble yourself to speak to me."

"I am sure, Scotia, it has not been pleasant to be with you lately; and as for speaking to you, I do not want to until you get into a better temper. If Angus Bruce were here, I dare say you would be as sweet as an angel. I suppose you are trying to imitate Aunt Yarrow. I think she is a very poor creature, neglecting her own flesh and blood, and adopting strange people. I hope I have some human nature in me. You ought to thank me for my interest in your suffering, and not threaten to kill me."

"What folly you are talking! Do not think you deceive me by it. Are you sure that it was the new gardener and his wife?"

"I will not say another word about it."

"You must answer me."

"Open the door, Scotia."

"Are you sure it was the gardener and his wife?"

"Open the door."

"Not till you tell me."

"Well then—I am sure."

"What a mean little creature you are, Bertha! You may go."

Bertha fled and told her mother that Scotia had a fever, and was raving, she thought; and with this assertion Scotia entered, and there was a stormy scene, in which Bertha denied all she had affirmed about the gardener; declaring that she had only blamed him in order to get out of the locked room.

"I was really terrified, mother!" and she crept close to Mrs. Rodney, and while she wept copiously,

begged her to remember how sick she was on Friday, and how impossible and unlikely she would do such things as she was accused of.

Mrs. Rodney believed her. She blamed Angus. She was sure either that jealousy of Captain Forbes had made him temporarily unfit to judge of people ; or else that his severe attack of headache had been preceded by some mental hallucination, which, combining with his jealousy, had made him see the thing he feared.

So Scotia had little comfort in her sorrow. Mrs. Rodney wished her husband would come back ! She began to cry at the trouble around her, and to feel as if she was deserted, and when Bertha said :

"I think it is wicked to annoy mother about our selfish little affairs just when she is coming back from the very grave ; let us be friends, Scotia."

Mrs. Rodney thought what a good child Bertha was, and how unreasonably Scotia behaved in refusing to answer her sister's gentle overtures.

"Scotia is my sister Jemima over again," said the convalescing mother ; "and, oh, dear ! what heartaches Jemima did give me !"

As for Angus, he suffered as strong men suffer when they bend their affections and their desires to their sense of duty. He was jealous, unreasonably jealous, miserably jealous, and in such case

" Fancies are
Just as valid as affidavits ;
And the vaguest illusions quite
As much evidence, as testimony
Taken upon oath."

But he had one loving, sympathetic consoler. His mother believed all he said. She pitied him ; she

advised him ; she approved all he proposed ; she encouraged him to write out his grief, and she partially believed him when he asserted his life to be blighted by Scotia's treachery. "He had been so happy," he said. "He had been dwelling in the land of sunshine and love, and hope. Suddenly he had been deserted. Over all his prospects had come

' A mist and a blinding rain,
And life could never be happy again.' "

XVII.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

"A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad heart tires in a mile—a."
—*Shakespeare.*

"But verily there are watchers over you—
Worthy reporters,
Knowing what ye do."
—*Koran.*

"He who the sword of heaven will bear,
Should be as holy as severe."

"Hope is the lover's staff."
—*Shakespeare.*

THE plaintive desire of Mrs. Rodney for the return of the Colonel found an earnest echo in Scotia's heart. And yet neither would hurry him by any complaint. Mrs. Rodney had forbidden all mention of her illness, and Scotia wrote her usual pleasant letters, though she felt as if her heart was breaking for his sympathy. All in vain this year came the joy and beauty of April and May to Scotia. The blackbird whistled his tattoo about the garden paths very early for her, but she did not throw open her casement to answer him. The soft, still, melancholy dawns could not woo her into their sweetness; the trees, misty with buds and plumes, with tufts and tassels, no longer heard her light, firm step beneath them. The primroses nestling amid the undergrowth—the sweet wood

violet—the fragile anemones with their wistful looks, won none of her old love and regard. Most of all the building birds missed her.

She sat still in the house, or lay with closed eyes upon her bed ; or paced the floor of her room with miserable, restless footsteps. If it were necessary she spoke to Bertha, but in a voice menhanical and unfeeling. She read to her mother, and talked with her on every subject but that of Bruce. His name she would not listen to. In her heart she had done him full justice. It was almost certain he had been deceived by some couple personating Captain Forbes and herself. If so she did not blame him for his anger ; but she did blame him for being so ready to believe wrong, and so remiss in righting the wrong.

Put in his place, she was quite sure she would have followed the couple and given them the reproach they deserved, or else the shame of their discovery. Put in his place, she was quite sure she would have taken love on his own denial, and assertion, and neither rested nor slept until the conspiracy was brought to light. But being only a woman, she could not move in her own defense. To wait and to suffer were her sole privileges.

She was also a proud girl, and she was wounded in her pride as well as her affection. Consciously or not, she had really felt that her love conferred a kind of social distinction upon the minister. It was impossible that she should have been for so many years her father's companion, and not have become a sharer in her father's pride of ancestry and family. Sometimes, indeed, she had felt annoyed at the slight importance Angus appeared to attach to this side of their engagement. He did not allude to it, and delicacy

had kept her silent. Yet she felt all the pride of Rodney in her heart, and to have her troth thrown back to her as worthless, gave her frequent spasms of chagrin and humiliation that wasted her away physically with their fever.

Bertha made several attempts to soften and conciliate her sister, but Scotia doubted their sincerity. She is afraid of consequences. She is afraid of father. Now that she has accomplished all her wicked desires she wants me to forget. "Undo the wrong you have done and I will forgive all that you have made me suffer." To every petition Bertha made, this was the answer she returned. And Bertha was not inclined to put herself in such a shameful position. She feared the look, the words, which Angus would give her. Anticipatively she burned with the fire of his contempt. It was impossible for her to face such humiliation.

Besides, it was really beyond her power to completely clear up the mystery. John and Sarah Latham had left Rodney. She had had one letter from Sarah dated from Leith, in which the woman said they would sail on the *John Anderson*, a merchant vessel bound for New York, on the following day. But it was part of Bertha's immediate punishment to feel a constant uncertainty concerning her accomplices. Since the Lathams had left, Bertha had been told that Sarah also was inclined to drink too much whisky, and Bertha recalled several personal experiences with the woman which confirmed the accusation in her own mind. Such a couple could not be depended upon. She feared every mail that came. A strange letter made her sick with terror, lest it might be a demand for more money. She was sorry enough now for what she had

done. It had cost her all her little hoard of gold. It gave her a constant anxiety. It had had an opposite effect upon Angus from the one she had anticipated; instead of making her his confidant and comforter in the matter, he had ceased coming to Rodney altogether. She had even heard that he was going to leave Rodney.

Always, hitherto, in all her small selfish plans and petty schemes for her own interest, Scotia had been easily moved to forgive. She had had only to say, "I am sorry, Scotia, I did not mean to pain you;" and the trouble was over. Now Scotia was less responsive with every passing day—more indifferent to her regrets—more silent—more utterly passive to all domestic interests. Her face had lost its fine color; her hair lay in dull loosened coils upon her pillow; she declared herself unable either to ride or to walk; she finally kept her room, and sank into a state of real invalidism.

But ere this climax was reached May was nearly over. Angus Bruce had resigned his charge and gone to Edinburgh. The Colonel and his son were in London, spending a gay week there with Lady Yar-row, the Cupars, and other county acquaintances. And it was about this time the letter Bertha feared came. Sarah Latham and her husband were still in Leith. They had missed their ship. They had been down with fever. In short, they wanted five pounds. Bertha borrowed the sum of the housekeeper and sent it, and then she commenced a new worry about the next claim. All the horror of a quick gathering debt was upon her, and she foresaw that after she had inextricably embarrassed herself, she might be compelled to face the shame of her position.

At the beginning of June, Colonel Rodney and his son Archibald returned. The Cupars traveled home with them, and it was evident that Julia and Archibald were on the high road to matrimony. The match was suitable in every way; there was nothing on either side but approvals and good wishes.

"You always wanted to marry the heir to Rodney," said Bertha to her friend in their first quiet interview—"you remember about Blair?"

"Blair is not to be named with Archie. Do you know that Blair is married?"

"No! Is it possible? To whom?"

"The widow of a publican. She is ten years older than Blair, but she has ten thousand pounds. They have gone to Australia. Gilchrist told me. It is strange you did not hear. I have more news for you. Sir Thomas Carr is coming to London. I saw his brother the day before we left. He is bringing secret despatches."

"Oh, Julia! If I could only meet him! Julia, help me in this matter, and I will do all I can to make you happy."

"Will you marry him? If so, I will invite him to our house. Indeed, he is sure to come and see Gilchrist. In the mean time, I can write nice little things about you."

"Julia, if you only would! Of course I shall marry him—if he asks me again. What can I do for you, Julia?"

"Well dear, you can marry. Girl friends are very nice, but when they become sisters-in-law they are objectionable. I should like Scotia and you to be married before I marry Archie. I am frank, Bertha, because girls see through each other, and I like to do

things on the plain giff-gaff principle, rather than trust to the uncertainties and anxieties of plotting and planning for one's own way. I want Scotia to be happy with her minister, and you with your Indian secretary, and then I can make myself happy at Innergrey without a continual fight against envy, malice, and all uncharitableness."

There was an uncharitable answer on Bertha's tongue, but she kept it there. Plain-spoken, truthful people are irritating. Truth ought to be diluted for the average taste. Bertha took the sharp mouthful of words without wincing. She wanted to marry Sir Thomas Carr, and Julia Cupar was the way to that end. To get out of the reach of Scotia's misery, and Bruce's scorn, and the Latham's drunkenness and greed, would be a good thing; no matter if she had to go to India to do it. India was not so bad. Calcutta was different from garrison life. There was a kind of court at Calcutta, and as Lady Carr, she would be a distinguished courtier. She read a great deal about India and was enthusiastic upon the subject. Sir Thomas Carr had only to come to Fife and get "yea" where he once got "nay."

Scotia had comforted herself somewhat with the hope of her father's sympathy. But when he returned, she found herself unable to tell him the whole truth. He was so happy, she could not bear to make him miserable. The travel, the warmth and sunshine, the constant society of two enthusiastic young men, had renewed his youth. His face had lost the pale, fretful look of the valetudinarian. He had abandoned his staff altogether, and walked erect and with firm steps. He was well pleased with Julia Cupar. She was handsome, shrewd, good-tempered, and possessed

of fine health and one thousand pounds a year. He could desire no better wife for his heir, and Archie loved, and was beloved by her.

Into this hopeful atmosphere Scotia could not bring her suffering and despair. Her father was told she had a fever, and he believed the fever accounted for the dreadful change in his darling. She let him think so; and only asked that she might be permitted to go to her Aunt Yarrow for a change. "I have asked aunt to put up with me for a little while," she said, "and she has sent me the kindest letter. Let me go, Mother. Let me go, Father."

Mrs. Rodney was sure it was the best thing for every one to let Scotia go away until she had learned to bear her burden more bravely. Mentally she contrasted Scotia's behavior on losing her lover with Bertha's, and she thought Bertha had borne her disappointment in far the nobler manner. For she did not take into consideration the different circumstances, and the opposite natures of the two girls, nor yet of their lovers. She saw only that Scotia's trouble troubled the otherwise happy house, and she rather resented the idea of Rodney House being shadowed by the influence of a man in the social position of Angus Bruce. The minister had never occupied a very favored place in her regard. She thought his attentions to Scotia presumptuous. She thought Scotia, with all her advantages, ought to make a much better marriage. Jemima's adopted son was not a proper match for her beautiful daughter.

Whatever her suspicions were regarding the trick played upon the minister, she kept them to herself. Bertha saw, however, that she was not displeased at the quarrel between Scotia and Bruce. And when

Bertha urged her mother to obtain for Scotia her desire with regard to visiting Lady Yarrow again, Mrs. Rodney privately decided that Bertha had excellent reasons for such urging. She thought it best to gratify both her daughters, without embarrassing herself with their motives.

It is so seldom that the event we look forward to, as likely to bring us some pleasure or salvation, ever meets, much less betters, our expectations. Scotia was pained and disappointed in many ways, instead of being comforted by her father's and brother's return. And perhaps one of the keenest and saddest was the indifference with which Bruce's removal was regarded. Archie had almost forgotten him, in his newer and more constant tutor. The Colonel took his absence with comfortable philosophy. He had something now of his wife's feelings about Scotia marrying a minister. He felt that, for the honor of Rodney, she ought to do better.

Then he was not sorry to find Innergrey empty. Archie wished to marry. The Colonel believed he might make some arrangement with Lady Yarrow about the house, and then there was nothing to delay the marriage. It was the event on which he now built all his future. His grandsons and granddaughters running through the halls and rooms of Rodney, was the vision which brightened all the years before him. Bruce was necessary to none of his plans. He stood in the way of some of them. He gave the minister a few words of honorable mention, and let him pass, as he hoped, out of his life.

Scotia was angry at this attitude. She thought it shameful ingratitude. Whatever Bruce had done to her, he had done nothing but kindness to the rest of

the Rodneys. She spoke with an irritation, ill-timed and ill-regulated, on the subject ; and found her remarks simply passed over or laid to the score of her sickness.

She was glad to get away from so much hope and happiness. In Lady Yarrow's quieter house, she might find the unnoticed seclusion and the silent sympathy she needed. Lady Yarrow was now at Yarrow Bell, one of the loveliest peaks of the Cheviots. The very thought of the place soothed Scotia, and all her dreams of it were more than verified, as she approached the secluded district in which Yarrow Towers stood. A lonely peace pervaded it. Lovely copses of wych-elm and birch embossed the land. The great hills stood around about the valleys. The running waters made music everywhere. The hamlets were few and far apart ; the shepherds' cots hid away in the crannies of the hills.

Far off she could see a large, lonely white house. It was pointed out to her as Yarrow Towers. It had a long snowy frontage, full of windows, and gardens stretching every way, until they touched heather or running water. When she entered the shady, solemn, planted places, she felt a sudden peace fall upon her restless heart. She bent her face into her hands and cried a little. When Lady Yarrow took her in her arms, she cried a great deal ; she could not restrain herself ; she sobbed herself to sleep to the soft crooning words the two women murmured above her.

Their sympathy was irresistible. That night she told her aunt and Ann everything. The old lady felt each word of her narrative. Ann instantly laid the blame on Bertha.

"Bertha must not have all the blame," said Lady

Yarrow. "Our son has behaved very badly to this poor lassie. You are his mother, Ann, and you ought to give him some angry words."

"Write yoursel', my lady. Angus isna to be blamed. Scotia doesna blame him. He couldna hae done either less or mair. The dear lad is suffering, too, I ken that. Angus Bruce, as Angus Bruce, would forgie everything."

"There is nothing to forgive, Ann."

"I'm supposing there is, my lady."

"I cannot permit evil to be supposed of my niece, Ann."

"Weel, weel! the lassie isna perfect, neither am I, nor yet your ain sel'. I was going to say he might forgie as Angus Bruce, and yet no daur to marry a lassie he thought unfit to help him in the office o' his ministry."

"Tut, tut! He thinks more of his office than there is any occasion for. He is neither pope nor kaiser, nor, just yet, moderator of the general assembly. He ought to think shame of himself for doubting a woman like Scotia Rodney."

"He be to believe his ain eyesight, my lady."

"He should have proved his ain eyesight."

"If Scotia had seen Angus making love to another lassie, would not she have done as he has done?"

"No!" said Scotia quickly. "I would have followed the seeming traitors, and proved them so. Or if Angus had made such denial to me as I did to him, I would have trusted in his word; and watched and waited, until it was proved to be truth itself. If proof had never come, I should still have believed him."

"Angus would hae been worthy o' belief in a' cases."

"Scotia is equally so, Ann."

"I never wronged Angus in a thought," said Scotia sadly.

"For a' that, my dear, you shouldna hae gane riding about wi' that young soldier."

"Jamie Forres is honor itself, Ann. I'll hear nothing against Jamie Forres. And he in love with Flora Monteith at that very time, and just troth plighted to her! The thing is past belief. He has not one thought of Scotia in the way of love-making, Ann."

"Aye; but our Angus didna ken that."

"Angus has been making a confidante of you, Ann; that is easily seen, Ann. Why did you not show me his letters? I would have been putting this matter straight long since."

"It is beyond your guiding, my lady. I hae put the matter where it belongs lang syne. It will come a' right, at the right time; and we had better bide the set hour."

But while waiting the set hour, sympathy is a great strengthener. Scotia had it in two forms. Lady Yarrow blamed Bruce, and thus gave her an opportunity to defend him. Ann excused her son, and so gave her still more pleasant opportunities of agreeing with her.

The house itself was restorative. Lady Yarrow called it her "Castle of Indolence." She permitted no noise and no hurry in it. The servants went leisurely about in felt slippers. Ceremonious dress was excused, the prevailing style being loose gowns of soft silk muslin. Lounging, dreaming, loitering seemed to be the only proper occupation of those large, silent rooms. There were no dogs on the place to bark. There were no giggling, singing servants;

douce, middle-aged men and women attended to the business of living, in a slow, methodical, noiseless manner.

Hour after hour Scotia lay upon a couch by an open window, watching the gardeners among the flowers and shrubs. There were two old men, but they seldom spoke to each other. Only the sound of running waters, and the voices of birds and bees, the murmuring of winds, or the pattering of rain, broke the restful peace of the place. In such circumstances a thoughtful soul has opportunity to hear its own complaints and desires; it can examine itself and talk to itself, and

Hearken what the inner spirit sings
There is no joy but calm.

For surely, amid all the sorrows and stress of life, men and women in all ages have had these passionate yearnings after rest. The garden of Eden; the blessed Avalon; the temple of Sangreal; the height of Mount Sitanta,—what are they but the visions of that passionate craving of the royal Hebrew? “Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest!”

Yet there were many echoes from the outside world in this fair retreat. Bruce’s letters to his mother and Lady Yarrow were full of the last scattering shots of the late theological battle. There are ministers who seem to be especially fitted for the demands of great cities. They keep the gates of the church, and stand “at arms” continually; there are others whom God sends into country places, to care only for the few sheep in some wilderness. Bruce was naturally a man of war; and he was now in the front of that gigantic financial battle with impossibilities, which brought out,

in such splendid force, the full moral majesty of the Free Kirk movement, and sowed Scotland with churches from Shetland to Galloway.

Had he time, with hands, and heart, and brain ever busy, to think of Scotia? Yes; she was the underlying thought of every hour. He felt the need of her sympathy, and the idea of her disloyalty was like a thorn in his heart; it fretted him through all his toil. It made him perhaps a little fierce and intolerant; fierce against all sin, intolerant of all indecision, or even of moderation in well-doing. His sermons were so fiery, so impassioned, so positive, that those who did not care to choose that day whom they would serve—God or the Devil—preferred not to have Angus Bruce ask them the question.

Lady Yarrow found her only objection to Bruce's ministry in this pronounced impatience of delay or vacillation. She had gone one Sabbath privately to hear him preach, and she came home a little ill-tempered at the sermon. "He hurries people too much, Ann," she said. "It is this way, or that way, and no time to consider. The sinners in kirk this morning must have felt as if they were hanging over Tophet; and the saints did not perhaps care to go to heaven so quickly as he was urging them on."

"Deed, our Angus calls neither saints nor sinners wi' an uncertain sound. You gave God a good soldier, my Lady."

"I did, Ann. I am proud enough of Angus Bruce." She sat still a moment smiling and then continued: "I would dearly like to have him preach to some gentlemanly expounders I have heard—men who are afraid to pronounce the 'h' in heaven and hell, and

who call damnation 'demnition.' Angus would give them every letter of the law ; eh, Ann ? ”

“ Every tittle, my Lady—the full measure to their sins, even the small dust of the balance.”

Both women reflected on this hypersensitiveness of conscience when they looked at Scotia. Perhaps both women thought in their secret hearts that Scotia had been a little to blame. Ann knew her son's strong love for the girl ; she was certain Angus had, what he thought, irrefragible proofs of her unworthiness, to have so absolutely given her up. Lady Yarrow thought that with a man so accurately truthful, a very innocent familiarity, a very trifling deviation from rectitude, would become an unpardonable offense. They had both written to him about Scotia. Lady Yarrow had not spared adjectives in describing Scotia's suffering and fading health. But Bruce made no comment, and took no action in the matter. He suffered, though, and three women knew he was suffering ; though he would neither make a complaint nor seek medicine for his heart-wound.

At Rodney the summer went happily away. Every element of sorrow had departed from the fair old house. The Colonel and his son were constantly together. They were father and son, and also good friends and comrades. And Bertha had now changed all her opinions about her brother. He was fond of Bertha. Her clinging, womanly ways pleased him. He taught her how to ride a horse, and every fine morning they could be seen on the road to Cupar House, to visit Julia. Frequently Julia returned to Rodney with them, and then, at night, Gilchrist came for Julia. The Colonel and Mrs. Rodney thought that never, in all their lives, had they been so really happy.

One morning about the end of August Archibald and Bertha rode over to Cupar House. As they approached the door, Julia and Sir Thomas Carr came to meet them. Bertha was looking uncommonly well, and her face flushed with pleasure when her old lover looked into it for his welcome. Julia had her habit on. "We were waiting for you"; she said. "Now we can go over to Rodney together." Archibald and Julia soon left Bertha and her lover far behind. They had so much to say to each other that they found out a longer road to Rodney in order to have time to say it.

Indeed, the family were at lunch when they arrived. Julia glanced at Bertha, and understood her quickly lifted eyelids and look of assurance. She touched the empty chair beside her, and said significantly :

"Are you hungry ? or satisfied ?"

"Satisfied ; yet I will have some game pasty, and a cream."

After lunch they left the three gentlemen to talk of India, and Indian affairs, and went to Bertha's room to discuss much more interesting matters.

"He has asked me to marry him, Julia."

"I hope you said a decent 'yes.' I mean a straightforward I-should-like-to 'yes'."

"I told him I had always loved him, and no one but him ; and he said, 'what a pure salvation Archibald's restoration was to us.' You know what kind of things are said—sworn to. Every man says the same words."

"Every man but Archie. I should be in favor of sending youths to Persia and Khiva to learn how to talk to women. My dear, I assure you Archie's vocabulary of love is as unique as it is emphatic. He

is like a lover out of the Arabian Nights. I never hoped for such luck."

"Take care you do not get a husband out of the Arabian Nights. I do not think they are nice. Sir Thomas is going to speak to Father to-night. We shall be married next month. He asked me if I could be ready, and I said 'easily'; and he thought I was 'so sensible'. Of course, I did not think it necessary to tell him my wedding dress was waiting, and that I should only have to add a few muslin things to my outfit."

"What a merciful blindness falls upon men when they are in love!"

"I shall have to send for Scotia to my wedding, though she may not be able to come. Lady Yarrow says she is very weak. I wonder what is the matter with her. After all, the younger is to be married before the elder; and I shall ask Angus Bruce to marry me to Sir Thomas. Angus is so handsome and distinguished-looking; he will give the proper religious tone to the wedding—our new minister is old and ugly, and he snuffles and shuffles."

"Bertha Rodney, you are sublime!"

And Julia looked at her friend with a queer kind of admiration. For Bertha had long ago confided to her the means she had used to break off the *mesalliance* between Scotia and Angus Bruce. Of course she had only given her own version of the story; she had withheld something, and she had added something, and thus managed to make the circumstance appear a rather clever, and not very ill-natured proceeding. And she had so frequently declared that she had to do something, in the absence of her father and illness of her mother, to preserve the honor of the

house, and keep her sister from ruining her whole future, that she had almost taught herself to believe her treachery was expedient.

The wooing of Sir Thomas went prosperously. Rodney House was again in a tumult for Miss Bertha's wedding. The side halls were encumbered with trunks and packing cases. Mrs. Rodney, between smiles and tears, was preparing her daughter for her new life. The Colonel, feeling that Bertha deserved some recompense for a disappointment she had taken so bravely, exerted himself, and partly denuded himself, to send her away with full hands. The world went very well with Bertha Rodney that sunny autumn.

She persuaded her father to write to Bruce. He was not eager to do it, but Bertha's requests in these last days were laws, and he did as she desired him. Angus perceived the restraint which bound the kind words, and he was wounded by it. Also, he would be likely to meet Scotia, and he was fully determined not to go into the way of temptation. If she said, "I am sorry, forgive me, Angus," what could he do but forgive her? He had forgiven her. But then she might expect their engagement to be renewed, and that was, he believed, impossible. If he ever married, it must be a woman not only precious to Angus Bruce, but who was also worthy of his office—a fit representative of the minister's wife. Both ought to be lights in the sight of the whole kirk; and if they were either of them dim or uncertain, some might go astray in consequence, and their souls be demanded at his hand.

This position may appear extravagant and far-fetched to certain teachers of the present day; but it

was a vital one to Angus. If his wife was not a crown of glory to his office, she must be a reproach and a stumbling block. He had explained to his mother and to Lady Yarrow this necessity very fully. Mrs. Bruce thought it one not to be disputed. Lady Yarrow said its stupidity was evident to any faculty but the theological one; and that if it was correct, then there ought to be colleges and universities for the training of ministers' wives.

So Angus Bruce refused to perform the ceremony of Bertha's marriage, and he declared to himself that he would never again of his own free will go to Rodney House. He made this determination one Saturday night, and he had broken it before the week was over. The Colonel's own letter was the first step toward the broken determination. Its mild suavity angered him, and in some not easily defined way it made him very severe with himself; and as a sequence, he preached with an exceeding fervor and severity. His afternoon sermon was full of such startling plain truths, and such vivid pictures and appeals, that men trembled and covered their faces, as if to hide from the Just and Awful One, whose creatures they were. He was exhausted himself with the service, solemnly exhausted; feeling very much as some old Hebrew prophet doubtless felt when he asked his heart, "Who hath believed our report?"

He went to the vestry and sat down; too sad and weary to remove his gown and bands. Putting his elbows on the table, he buried his face in his palms. Vaguely the slow tramp of the departing congregation fell on his senses; it grew fainter and fainter, and he began to think of ungowning and going home. He was very weary, and he looked so. One of the elders

opened the door and was struck by the tired, listless air of the usually prompt minister.

"Mr. Bruce," he said, "a poor woman in great distress of mind wishes to see you."

"I am worn out, Elder. I cannot speak another word. Yes, I can ; through Christ strengthening me. Bring her here."

In a few moments he was alone with her. She was a tall, slight woman, but she kept her face veiled. Something about her seemed familiar to Angus. He said, "I do not know you. I do not ask to know you. Speak frankly to me."

"I have committed a great sin. You have made me feel it. I am afraid to go home. I used to live in Rodney Law, and when I knew you were preaching here, I came in to see you—to hear you."

"If you have sinned, there is the Sin-Bearer and the Sin-Pardoner. You know Him."

"I have sinned against you. Will you forgive me?"

"How have you done me any wrong? All sin is against God. Put me out of the question."

"I cannot. I did you a great wrong. I did a young lady, who was always kind to me, a shameful wrong. I mean Miss Rodney."

She did not need to tell him more ; the truth flashed clear and vivid as the lightning of heaven across his mind. He stepped close to her, he put his hand upon her shoulder, and she trembled like a reed.

"You mean that it was you and Captain Forres I saw at the stile in Rodney Park?"

"It was I, and my husband, John Latham. I am Sarah Latham. John wore Captain Forres's cloak. I wore Miss Rodney's pelisse. I left her cloak and glove on the stile, purposely, for you to find."

"My God !"

He said the words reverently, almost gratefully, and remained a moment in silence that was worship.

"Who asked you to do this thing? What made you do it?"

"I wanted money to go to America. I do not wish to tell who asked me to do it."

"Your penitence is of no avail, unless it be without reservation. Answer. Who asked you to do this wicked thing?"

"Miss Bertha Rodney. She promised me thirty pounds and she paid me the money. But John and I were unlucky with it. We spent most of it for our passage to New York, and then John got drunk, and the ship did not wait for us."

"And you also?"

There was something she could not deny in his tone—she answered sadly. "I was drunk also."

"Have you written since to Miss Bertha Rodney for money?"

"Three times. She only sent me two pounds last time."

"Write no more to her. If you do, you shall be punished. Even sinners must keep to their sinful bargains with each other. Is this all you have to tell?"

"Yes. Will you forgive me? Will you ask Miss Rodney to forgive me?" She began to weep bitterly, and Bruce prayed with her, and gave her the assurance of his pardon. But she went away full of fear and trouble—a fear and trouble Angus did not deprecate; for he hoped it would finally bring her peace and consolation. And there was now hope and joy in the heart of Angus Bruce.

"A soul troubled for sin is a full meal to our minister"; said the waiting elder, when Angus gave him a cheerful "adieu" and walked with brisk steps down the ancient, gloomy street.

"Now I can go to Scotia!" he said. "Now I can go to Scotia! Now I can go to Scotia! Afterward, I shall visit Miss Bertha!" And if Miss Bertha could have seen the minister's set, stern face at that moment, she would have broken her laughter in two and gone away with a quaking heart, and a fearful looking-forward to what it portended.

XVIII.

GOOD-BY AND JOY BE WITH US ALL !

“ All things we cannot know. At sea
As when a good ship saileth,
Our steps within the planks are free,
Beyond all cunning faileth,”

“ Maiden, thou hast heard the lesson,
As my tongue hath strength to tell,
Typed for thee in flowery garden ;
Take it now and use it well.
Wingéd words are lightly spoken,
With the breath the sermon dies ;
But the precept of the moment
Tasks a lifetime, to the wise.”

—*Blackie.*

JOY, as well as grief, is a wakeful spirit. Angus slept none that blessed Sabbath night, and as he found it impossible to banish thoughts of Scotia, he set them all to thanksgiving. Even if she refused to pardon him—if she refused to give him again the troth he had so angrily returned to her—yes, even if her love for him was dead, he could still rejoice in the purity and perfection of his ideal woman. He could still love her and believe in her and keep her exquisite memory to sweeten all his after life.

In the gray light before dawning he left Edinburgh. He reached Kirkton in the afternoon, refreshed himself at the little inn there, and hired a gig to take him to Yarrow Bell. And as he began to climb the mountain road, Angus remembered the great hills shoul-

dering one another ; and the silvery, shining waters leaping from crag to crag, until they reached the valley. The heather was in bloom, and the little companies of sheep resting in it looked white as snow in its violet haze.

Here and there a shepherd was strolling up or down the hillsides, and one at a great altitude was singing, to the exquisite minors of St. Mary's, the twenty-third psalm :

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want ;
He makes me down to lie,
In pastures green he leadeth me
The quiet waters by.*

Far off and far down, the happy pastoral sought out all the sweet, silent places. The singer stood on a jutting rock overlooking the road and the valleys far away, and Bruce, lifting his eyes, could just catch his tall figure, standing clearly out against the blue Cheviots behind him. His voice was the voice of a strong man rejoicing to sing of goodness and mercy, rejoicing to tell heaven and earth

In pastures green he leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

Bruce lifted the lines with him, and so singing went up to the Bell.

He reached the great iron gates of Yarrow Towers just as the psalm was finished, and there he sent back the gig, and went through them, with the four last lines lingering on his lips and making melody in his heart.

Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me ;
And in God's house forever more,
My dwelling place shall be.

* Scotch Psalms ; version allowed by General Assembly of Church of Scotland.

The great stillness and greenness of the place made him feel as if he was in a dream. The perfect confidence of the animals and birds made him feel as if he was in Eden. The hare looked at him shyly from her form; the squirrel from its branch. The dappled deer browsing under the oaks had no fear. The birds with their newly-fledged families twittered to him about the heat, and the difficulty of the young birds flying in it. He was impatient to see Scotia, but he did not hurry; he felt only that he was gathering hope and strength with every step he took.

Just where the park became the fruit garden, he saw a form he knew among the raspberry standards.

"Mother! Mother!"

He did not speak loudly, but what word has such an insinuating power—insinuation that is almost authority. Ann turned very quickly at the first call. She came to meet him gladly, all her movements expressing joy and welcome. Never before had she been so handsome in her son's eyes. Her white gown, her black silk apron, the rough straw hat tied down with a ribbon, the little rush basket full of berries in her hand, made her look, in her ripe and ample beauty, like the goddess of some ancient garden.

"My dear Angus! Oh, but you are welcome!"

"My dear mother! I have come with good news."

"Have you received the 'call' to Free St. Mungo's yet?"

"I have accepted it—that is another thing. I am come about Scotia."

"Oh, Angus, I'm feared there is nae gude news about her."

"She is innocent of all that I have blamed her for—

she is pure as a new opened lily—she is true as you are, mother.”

“Weel, weel, I’m glad to hear tell o’ such wonders.”

“Where? when can I see her?”

“You can gae wi’ me straight to her side. You can gae wi’ me this vera minute. If you hae come to put wrong right, the sooner you get about the business, the better.”

They were within the large cool hall. All was very quiet. Ann pointed to a lofty door, and then passed out of her son’s sight. She had the self-denial of a great nature. She was capable of resigning all share in joy she could not heighten. Angus opened the door. It moved so perfectly, so smoothly on its hinges that Scotia was not aware of his entrance.

She sat in a deep, low chair by the open window. She had a book in her hand, but it was a closed book; her eyes were out-looking; she had the gaze of one who is seeing things invisible. Indeed, she was at that moment looking backward to hours forever gone. She was thinking of Bruce, and thinking of him with great tenderness. She had come to that point where anger was dead, and she had begun to make excuses for her lover; and had begun even to find in his supersensible and supersensitiveness of conscience, a noble and excellent trait. And after all, he was not to blame. He believed her guilty on the evidence not of words, but of his own senses. Perhaps he ought—perhaps he ought—

She was at this point in her solitary argument, when she heard Bruce’s step upon the carpet. It was dulled by the soft, thick pile, but she detected its peculiarity in a moment. She rose quickly and steadied herself by leaning upon the back of her chair. Bruce was

approaching her. His face had a story in it. She looked at him eagerly, inquisitively ; she was white as her white gown. Her lips parted slightly, and she uttered a thin, sharp cry.

He stood before her. His attitude was that of grief and contrition. "Miss Rodney," he said, "I have wronged you from the first to the last. I was too hasty. I never ought to have doubted you for a moment. I am unworthy of your love, because of my doubt. Forgive me, if you can ! Love me again, if you can !"

Scotia stepped forward ; she put her arms around his neck ; she said, oh, such words, such sweet words of pardon. There are no sweeter, no more divine words, spoken on earth, than those love whispers when it forgives. She mingled them with happy tears. She sealed them with fondest kisses.

Angus seated her again in her chair and drew his own close by her side. Holding her hands, he told her all that Sarah Latham had confessed to him. Scotia listened now without anger. The trouble was over. Angus was closer than ever to her, she could afford to forgive, even those who were not sorry—who still kept the secret of their wrong-doing. She heard with a happy indifference the particulars, and then turned the conversation on Bruce's own prospects. She had heard he was to have the call to Free Saint Mungo's in Edinburgh. Was it true ? Was it not a very large congregation ? Was it not a great honor ?

They were talking of these things when Ann and Lady Yarrow entered. Lady Yarrow gave Bruce her hand, but she said, with a shake of her head, "So you have come at last, sir. I think shame of your loitering."

"I think shame of it myself, mother."

"Hear what he says, Ann! The lad has some grace left."

Then Bruce explained the circumstances again. It never entered his mind to extenuate or smooth over Bertha's share in the conspiracy. A sinner, rich or poor, friend or foe, was a sinner to Bruce. If he thought excuse in the matter possible, he would have given it to Sarah Latham, and not to Bertha. Sarah had the old, old plea for doing evil—she was doing it, for good to come. Bertha had no such excuse. He did not spare her in the narrative of the wrong done.

"She is the daughter of her mother," said Lady Yarrow bitterly.

"But, Aunt, my mother would not have permitted Bertha to do anything so cruel, if she had known of it—that is most certain."

"You are right, my dear. Come, let us be sensible, and at Yarrow Bell ignore what is going on at Rodney. Yet I hear there is talk of a marriage there, and Scotia is wanted. I am very averse to her going."

Oh, the two days of perfect joy that followed this reunion! By tacit consent all unhappy subjects were forgotten. Scotia looked forward and not backward, and Ann and Lady Yarrow watched them with a more than human sympathy—more than human, because there was not in it a single selfish element. They encouraged the young people to be the world to each other. It was gratification enough for them to watch the handsome couple wandering in the translucent, green light under the trees, or in the shady garden, when the setting sun made the air seem full of gold dust.

The night before Angus was to leave, Lady Yarrow came to them as they sat together after sunset. They leaned against each other. Angus was holding his love's hand, their eyes were fixed upon the mountains turning iron-gray against a yellow sky. At this hour they looked stupendous. It was a little chilly, and at the same moment Ann came in with a soft woolen shawl, which she wrapped around Scotia. Scotia lifted her face gratefully and Ann kissed her. Ann was not demonstrative ; the act was a very significant one ; it had an influence far stronger than its apparent reason. A three-fold cord is not easily broken. In that moment a mysterious one, impalpable to sense, but strong to resist all the wear and tear of life, bound the son, and the mother, and the future wife together. As they stood thus, Lady Yarrow put a letter into Bruce's hand.

Before you speak to Colonel Rodney about Scotia, give him this letter, Angus. A golden key opens all doors—and very near all hearts ”; and to avoid Bruce's questions and thanks, she began to talk eagerly about a caterpillar of very lovely shades she had just taken off her dress. “I must have got it in the garden. Poor, ignorant worm ! It knows not what bliss awaits it. What purple wings ! Knows not it will have the air for its kingdom, and the flowers for its pantry. It is blind to all its coming glories, and a little while ago it was eating leaves and grass. As regards it, I am a prophet. I can see what it has been, and what it will be. Is there not One, who, from the heights of heaven, looks thus upon our destiny ? ”

“It is a beautiful symbol of our future life,” said Bruce.

“Perhaps, also, of our pre-existence.” Scotia spoke

musingly, as if the words came without intention, and indeed she was sorry for them, as soon as they were uttered. For Lady Yarrow, always eager for discussion, answered :

“ We do not permit such statements, Scotia, unless you make them clearer.”

“ I was only asking myself, does the grub remember the egg ; the chrysalis, the grub ; the butterfly, the chrysalis ? In the same way, may we not have lived lives before this one ; humbler, less intelligent, less beautiful.”

“ My dear Scotia ! ” and Bruce took her hands and looked steadily into her eyes, “ complete the circle. Does the egg remember the butterfly ? Dearest ! can you think we possess eternity only to escape from it, by recommencing our lives ? To be little children again ; to struggle through the weakness, the ignorance, the unreasonable afflictions of childhood ; to fight over again the battles of maturity ; to grow old again ; to die—would this be the satisfaction that is promised us ? ”

“ Even this view has splendid opportunities and possibilities, Angus dear, but we must——”

“ Children,” said Lady Yarrow positively, “ have you considered this life sufficiently ? When you are married to Angus, Scotia, do you intend to trouble him with all these restless questions ? ”

“ I hope so ” ; answered Angus promptly. “ We shall not again quarrel about them. Scotia will bring them to me—and only me. I shall respect her ideas, even where I cannot change them.”

“ I am glad to hear this. There is such an infinite variety in all things. No two roses on a tree just alike. Do we wish them so ? Angus, you must not ruth-

lessly, and in a moment, expect to cut Scotia to your own shape and size. Scotia, you must give Angus room and love to reach to the full stature of his nature. In years, such husbands and wives grow into a lovely similitude—a similitude retaining all individual characteristics."

"Scotia, in the main, is a good Calvinist, mother. We both hold the Bible in our hands and hearts. We both believe in the fatherhood of God, and the sacrifice of Christ. There are plenty of points on which we can agree."

"But if God should gie you sons and daughters," said Ann solemnly, "fence their youth around wi' Calvinism, wi' the dear auld Shorter Catechism."

Lady Yarrow smiled, but added, "Ann, you are right, as you always are. The Shorter Catechism is the Magna Charta of a really strong character. Stern and harsh, some say! Well, suppose it is. What is character? Is it not something engraved; and the engraving process is not done with a feather. Engrave on the minds of the young the strongest law you can find, in the very strongest character. You believe me, Scotia?"

"I do, dear aunt. I know that a young sapling must have a fence around it, or the cattle will browse on the leaves, and many dangers will come to it."

"And the best of a' fences is the Shorter Catechism," said Ann dourly.

Scotia smiled and continued, "And if the tree grows strong and high inside its fence, all is well. Also, if it send out roots beyond, and branches beyond, and grow fair and fine beyond, and break away the fence, because it is strong enough to burst its bonds, and to take a wider growth, and a higher freedom; is it not

also a tree that God has planted and watered, and blown upon, and shone upon? Angus knows my heart to its depths. If he grow up like a mountain fir tree,—strong, compact, ever pointing skyward,—he will suffer me to grow by his side, though I be like a birch tree, spreading my branches far and wide, and rustling my silver-lined leaves to every wind of God that touches me."

And Angus took her hands, and looked into her eyes, with a promise that she felt to be wise and kind as it was inviolable.

The next morning Bruce left Yarrow Bell for Rodney. He was going to see Bertha. He had no intention of speaking to Colonel Rodney about his engagement to Scotia until after Bertha's marriage. But he did think that young lady ought to realize that she had failed. He could not let her begin a new life with the idea that wickedness was a success.

He reached Rodney late, and stayed at Innergrey all night. Early in the morning he walked over to Rodney House and asked to see Bertha. She was not so anxious to see Bruce now. She was going to be Lady Carr, and Bruce had refused to perform the ceremony. His unexpected call gave her no uneasiness. She only speculated, as she put on her most becoming morning dress, "What could have brought him to Rodney? Perhaps he had altered his mind, and wished now to take a part in her wedding. Perhaps he had found out that he loved her." She made herself sweetly pretty, and went down with a smile.

Bruce made no preliminaries. As soon as she entered the room he said, "Miss Bertha, Sarah Latham came to me and revealed the disgraceful plot you carried out together. I have written out all she said; I

must insist upon your signing your name to it. I think it is the only way to protect your sister Scotia from inuendos derogatory to her as Miss Rodney, and also as my intended wife."

Bertha grew scarlet as he spoke. Her very hands were red. She trembled with fear and impotent passion as she took the paper Bruce offered. As she read it, her face constantly changed. Terror of her father, terror of Sir Thomas, terror of all that would follow, blanched the crimson white again. As she remembered the nicety of Sir Thomas Carr's honor, his hatred of anything mean, the contempt he would feel for her; and then put in sympathy with it her father's passionate sense of right and wrong, his love for Scotia, his abhorrence of lying, she foresaw a sequence of events which would again break off her marriage, and consign her to general contempt.

What must she do? She could not deny the circumstance. She looked into Bruce's stern face, and saw no hope of pity in it. He intended to make her sign that paper, and then show it to her father and mother, and perhaps to Sir Thomas Carr. She had no time to make exceptions, or consider possibilities in her favor; her case was a desperate one. She accepted the last resort of a desperate, unreasonable, cowardly woman. She went into a fit of the most alarming hysterics. She filled the house with her shrieks; she held her hands over her heart, and gasped for breath, as if she were dying. She fell upon the floor, in a perfectly decorous abandon.

Colonel Rodney, Archibald, Mrs. Rodney, all the servants from the kitchen and the garden, from the dairy and the stables, came running to answer her piercing cries for help. Archibald cried to the ostler

for a fleet horse, and went flying through the park for a doctor. Mrs. Rodney had the apparently dying girl carried to her room, and it took several servants to carry her. The whole house was in a state of disorganization—hot water, cold water, brandy, laudanum—a dozen voices calling for a dozen restoratives.

Bruce was genuinely terrified. So was the Colonel, and every man on the place. The women were more calm. They had all, even the youngest dairy-maid, an instinctive knowledge of Bertha's complaint. They felt that under certain circumstances they might be affected much in the same way. Archie, riding for life or death, the Colonel wringing his hands in speechless misery, Bruce feeling at once like a judge pronouncing sentence and a sheriff carrying it out, were all suffering far more than the sobbing, shrieking girl upstairs. Bruce, indeed, blamed himself somewhat. He had not expected that the conviction of her sin would be so strong and so terrible to Bertha. He had meant to be merciful to her, but he could not now take any comfort from his intention.

As soon as the doctor had pronounced the case "not dangerous" he went back to Innergrey. He was afraid the Colonel would question him, and he was not now inclined to tell the Colonel. Bertha would doubtless be equal to supplying the cause for the effect. Until he could see her again, the affair must be at rest.

Bertha was cleverly non-committal. She did not know what was the matter. Mr. Bruce had just said "good-morning," and before she could speak, the pain and the choking came on. The doctor, with the wise intelligence of doctors in domestic matters, gravely suggested heart-disease, and behind this

fortification Bertha sheltered herself, pale, exhausted, with her hair and clothing more out of order than any member of the House of Rodney had ever before seen them. Finally, a sedative put her to sleep ; and every one went on their tip-toes, and talked in whispers of poor Miss Bertha's heart-disease

She was roused from this affectation of invalidism by a circumstance startling enough. In mid-afternoon Sir Thomas Carr was seen riding at a hard gallop through the park. He had been summoned to London. His despatches were ready. There was no time for delay. The marriage must take place at once, or be put off indefinitely. The alternative was made as delicately as possible to Bertha. It acted like a miracle. She was well in sixty seconds. All her wits came back to her, sharp and clear.

"Very well, dear mother. Tell Sir Thomas I will be ready at six o'clock. That will give us time to send for the minister and our nearest neighbors. My principal trunks can be sent after me to Southampton. If Sir Thomas has to leave at eight o'clock, I shall not detain him a moment. I hope I realize his position, and my duty, better. And oh, dear, dear mother, it is perhaps better that such a long looking-forward to parting is avoided ! I cannot help feeling so much about it ? The feeling was really what made me ill this morning."

The marriage, so unexpectedly forced forward, was in some respects a great success. Bruce, coming back in the afternoon to inquire after Bertha's condition, was persuaded by the Colonel to perform the ceremony ; and the pallid bride gave him one sad, long look which his kind heart could not resist. He answered it with an assuring glance. Bertha was

comforted by it. She was so modest, and so sorrowful, and the quick parting with her kindred and home seemed to distress her so much, the minister could not but give her what comfort was in his power. In a few whispered sentences he warned her against future deceptions, and gave her Scotia's and his own forgiveness.

At six o'clock precisely the bride appeared in her splendid wedding garments, shining with jewels, and looking even more lovely for her pallor and sadness. The parlors were crowded with guests hurriedly summoned, many of whom had but just heard Bertha Rodney was dying, when they received the Colonel's invitation to see her married. There was a general air of pleasure and satisfaction. Events that come as surprises are nearly always great successes. Bertha was so beautiful; Sir Thomas so proud and happy; the impromptu feast, the genial minister, the splendid house all lighted and flung open, the murmur of conversation, of low laughter, the busy importance of the servants, all aided the feeling of an accomplished destiny.

At eight o'clock a carriage, drawn by fleet horses, appeared at the door, and Bertha, in a pretty traveling costume, entered it. She was both weeping and smiling. Her father, and mother, and brother stood with loving, anxious faces watching her as she drove away. The full moon shone with unclouded radiance. She felt her husband's arms around her. She was Lady Bertha Carr. She was going to London, to India. She had her own plans about India. She felt she had diplomatic talents; she had a proper field for them in that vice-regal court. Life had fair possibilities yet in keeping for Lady Bertha Carr, and

she kissed her husband, and turned not unhappily to meet them.

Rodney House was very dull after Bertha had gone away. She had always known how to keep it interested about her affairs. There was no one to take her place in this respect. Archie was a great deal with Julia Cupar. The Colonel was often lonely. Scotia was hardly well enough to come home. Bruce had accepted the call to Free Saint Mungo's, and was in Edinburgh. Very soon Lady Yarrow would be in Edinburgh. Thinking of these things one day, the Colonel suddenly resolved to close Rodney House and take Mrs. Rodney and Archie to Edinburgh for the winter. Archie could then have the benefit of the University lectures. And Archie, knowing the Cupars were certain to be there, very urgently pressed the change ; so that it was finally decided to allow Scotia to remain with her aunt until they all met at the capital.

This meeting occurred in the first days of October. Among the Cheviots the winter comes early, and Lady Yarrow was back at the Edinburgh mansion when Colonel Rodney and his family took possession of the house they had rented. It was not far from Yarrow House, and there was now no alternative but that the long-parted sisters must meet. Both dreaded the meeting ; but events were kinder to them than they could have planned. Of course both households were to worship in Free Saint Mungo's, and Lady Yarrow, having bought a large pew there, offered its use to Colonel Rodney's family. The offer was accepted, and as they reached Edinburgh on a Saturday night, and were rested sufficiently for church on the following afternoon, the first meeting of the reunited family took place there.

It was the Sacrament Sabbath, and an intense solemnity filled the building. The Colonel, Mrs. Rodney, and Archie arrived at church first, and entered Lady Yarrow's pew. In a few moments Lady Yarrow and Scotia stood at its door. The Colonel gave his daughter one look of love, as he and Archie permitted the two ladies to pass them. Lady Yarrow went first, and she was thus compelled to seat herself next her sister. A shadow fleeting as a thought passed over her face ; she bowed her head, and really prayed for grace and strength.

When she lifted her head, Dorinda was looking down with a troubled gaze. Lady Yarrow lifted her hand and clasped it in her own. Then all the congregation rose for prayer, and further advances were impossible. But when the white-haired elder brought the holy cup, and the Colonel drank and passed it to his son, and Archie to his sister, and Scotia to her aunt, then Lady Yarrow had her gracious opportunity. She drank, she touched her sister, their eyes met. In that glance, a free, noble, absolute pardon was given and accepted. Jemima gave her sister Dorinda the holy cup, and in its blessed, crimson tide they buried forever the bitterness of a generation.

The next day was full of congratulations, of the kindnesses of late love, of the gayness of restored kindred. Julia Cupar came in with Archie, and equalized and tempered all effusive feeling. She was so pleasantly commonplace, so full of graceful chit-chat concerning everybody and nobody. It was understood that she was to be a very important member of the family, and Lady Yarrow took kindly to her. She liked her clever speech, her air of fashionable life, her thorough conservatism.

"She is a very pretty daughter of Mr. Worldly-wise-man," she said, "and I congratulate you, Dorinda, on the future mistress of Rodney."

Amid so much marrying and prospective marrying, Bruce and Scotia kept their engagement quiet till near the end of the year. Bruce's kirk was finished, but there was some delay in deciding about a manse. Part of the congregation wished to build a new one, but Lady Yarrow's influence and contribution decided the question in favor of buying a fine old house near the new kirk. And when this affair was settled, there seemed to be no reason for longer delay.

Bruce presented his letter and reminded the Colonel of his previous promises. There was no need to urge them. Lady Yarrow's settlement upon her adopted son made him a very proper mate for Scotia; and the Colonel told himself that Scotia had given him, after all, a son-in-law very much to his liking. Their friendship had been full of happy hours; they were hoping to add many more to them. With tender words, and some tears, the Colonel gave his beloved Scotia to his friend and minister; and Angus and Scotia had now only to furnish their home and set their wedding-day.

Ann took charge of the furnishing. She had saved a great deal of money. It was her pleasure to make her son's manse a wonder among manses; to adorn every room with rich and suitable appointments; to fill the linen chests with the finest damask, and the buffets with the purest silver plate.

"Naething is too good for a good minister," she said, in excuse for her loving extravagance—if it needed excuse—"and the rich men o' Saint Mungo's dinna want their minister to be warse sarved than themsel's. It tak's the Son o' God to preach and

pray for a bite and a promise, and never a place to lay his head."

Toward the end of the year Bertha's first letter arrived, and Scotia took it over to Yarrow House. It was full of such small triumphs as delighted Bertha. She had already taken the lead in the trivialities and formalities of her position. She was infatuated with her husband, and everything that belonged to her husband. "There were a great many English ladies," she said, "but she was much the prettiest of them all, and her dresses had made most of them sick with envy."

Lady Yarrow laughed. "She will get every one into hot water. Take care of that letter, Scotia. You will see that each one will be a little cooler. She will hate India in half-a-year, and will cry out so pitiably that we shall all exert ourselves to get Sir Thomas a position in England. By bell and book! she will be back in Fife in less than two years."

As she spoke, Bruce and his mother entered. The weather was wet and drippy; it was the hour before candle-light—the hour conducive to confidence. They sat down by the fire, and for the first time Scotia told her friends all about Bertha's appeal to her concerning Blair Rodney, and that young man's offer to both sisters.

Ann listened with a face expressing a pious wonder at such doings; but Lady Yarrow understood the Colonel's anxiety and disappointment, and the whole domestic drama. She looked at Scotia, who sat smiling by Bruce's side, and said:

"You imprudent lassie! You might have lost a fine estate for a mouthful of soft words, if Archie had not come to his own."

"I might," answered Scotia; "and, indeed, my father called me that day, 'A sister to Esau'."

The relationship seemed to strike both Lady Yarrow and Ann; they pursued it fancifully, from point to point.

"Weel, weel!" said Ann, "Bertha, has had to go to Padan-aram—that is, India; and she didna get Rodney when a' was said and done."

"Yet I dare say," continued Lady Yarrow, "that Bertha will get rich there; and come home with two bands, and I am just as sure Scotia will do as Esau did, go with love and blessing to meet her."

Here a servant brought wax lights, and drew the blinds, and while he moved about, Lady Yarrow sat thinking, with her eyes fixed upon the lovely girl opposite her. There was a smile on the old lady's lips; she played with her rings and her laces, and seemed to be recalling something. Bruce may have guessed what it was, for when they were alone again he lifted a candle and went to the reading desk at the other end of the room. A large Bible lay upon it. The three women curiously followed him. Lady Yarrow leaned on her handsome friend and handmaid. Scotia went softly to Bruce's side and leaned her head upon his shoulder, as his long white hands reverently turned the leaves of the Holy Book.

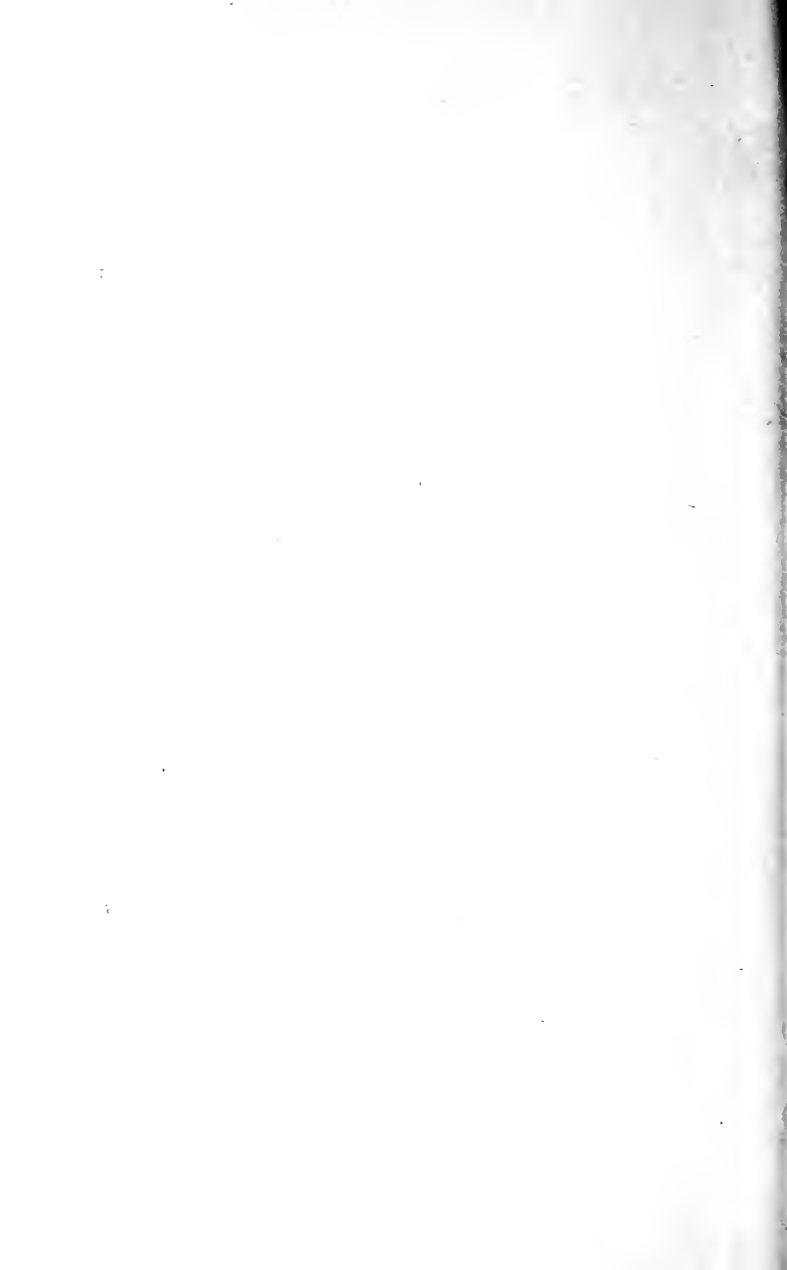
In a moment or two he looked into her face smiling, and said: "If you are a sister to Esau, Scotia, you have a very fine inheritance. Here it is promised: *Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above.*"

And Lady Yarrow was silent, but she stooped and kissed Scotia; and Bruce kissed her; and Ann kissed

her; and when they had sat down again, Ann said softly:

“My dear Scotia, there is ane mair thing. My Lady Bertha is gane to Padan-aram; but you are to dwell among your ain folk, and in your ain countree!”

THE END.









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